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The mid-century (1845-1855) Victorianism in the poetry of three major writers

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THE MID-CENTURY (1845-1855) VICTORIANISM IN THE POETRY OF THREE MAJOR WRITERS

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CHAPTER I

Mid-Century Victorianism Defined

The duty of defining a word is certainly not an easy task. This is particularly true of a word which, after many attempts, is still not defined satisfactorily. "Victorianism" is that type of word. It would seem that many of the "ism" words are so associated with connotations that precise and accurate definitions are impossible. It is, however, mandatory to define "Victorianism" in an attempt to discuss the "Victorianism" of some of the mid-century "Victorian" works of three major poets of the period: Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold.

The Victorian Era received its name from the ruler of England from 1832-1901. Queen Victoria, a girl of eighteen at her ascension, grew to be one of the most powerful and influential rulers in England's history. The queen influenced her subjects in most areas of life: She set high moral standards. The queen's family life was well ordered, thus producing much literature concerning family life in general. Victoria had well-known prejudices; thus the public seemed to accept these prejudices as its own. And finally, Victoria had a keen mind, which may have accounted for many books of the period requiring much thought.[1] Lecky, a

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[1]Amy Cruse, The Victorians and Their Books (London, 1935), p. 13.

historian of the period, stated that no country had ever been governed so well as England during Victoria's reign.[2]

It would seem then that England's Victorian Age, with such a capable leader as Victoria, could be classified as a quiet, noninterrupted era with the citizens merely following their monarch's bidding. This, however, is not wholly true. Certainly, Victoria's subjects listened intently to their queen, but the period was also one of transition and revolution. This revolution was not military though. Rather, humanity's concepts were changing. Thomas Arnold in 1838 said that he saw a new "atmosphere of unrest and paradox hanging around many of our ablest young men of the present day."[3] This was also shown in Carlyle's Sartor Resartus and Mill's Spirit of the Age. Carlyle said, "The Old has passed away, but also, the New appears not in its stead; the Time is still in pangs of travail with the New."[4] In 1850, Hugh Stowell in his lecture, "The Age We Live In," also said:

> /In 1850 the age is still one/of fusion and transition.... Old formulas, old opinions, hoary systems are being thrown into the smelting pan; they are fusing--they must be cast anew; who can tell under what new shapes...they will come forth from the moulds?[5]

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[2]William Ralph Inge, The Victorian Age (Cambridge, 1922), p. 28.

[3]Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven, 1951), p. 8.

[4]Thomas Carlyle, "Characteristics," Essays (New York, 1896), p. 32.

[5]Houghton, p. 9.

Jerome Buckley attempted to list the characteristics of all this transition and fusion. Buckley said the Victorians were:

1. torn by doubt, spiritually bewildered, lost in a troubled universe
2. crass materialists
3. excessively religious, lamentably idealistic, nostalgic for the past
4. looking to the world beyond
5. conformists
6. rugged individualists
7. iconoclasts who worshipped authority
8. sentimental humanitarians and hard-boiled proponents of free enterprise
9. politically governed by insular prejudice but swayed by imperialistic design
10. believers in progress, denied original sin, affirmed the death of the Devil
11. bothered by problems of good and evil
12. professors of "manliness," but yielded to feminity
13. believers in the emancipated woman, but denied her of her place in society
14. sexually inhibited, but had big families
15. patrons of art which was hypocritical and ingenuous
16. readers of literature which was too often purposeful, propagandistic, didactic, romantic, aesthetic, and escapist.[6]

If one were to analyze Buckley's sixteen points, he would perhaps conclude that there was much confusion. It should be noted that Buckley excessively employs the conjunction "but" to join two sets of characteristics in the era. Buckley says that the Victorians were "torn by doubt," but they were also "excessively religious." It seems difficult to understand how a people could be religious, which might lead one to a peaceful state of mind, and at the same time be in a turmoil because of doubt and bewilderment. Likewise,

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[6]Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Victorian Temper (Cambridge, 1951), p. 2.

it seems paradoxical that these "rugged individualists" would be "conformists," and also be "iconoclasts," idol breakers, who worshipped that authority that they were attempting to break. It is also unlikely that one can be sentimental and, at the same time, hard-boiled. Politically, the same paradox applies. How can one be isolated in his feelings of patriotism and still desire great world conquest? Also, how is it possible for one to believe in progress and still cling to the old ideas and superstitions of the past? Religion and politics, however, were not the only puzzling areas of Victorian thought. The problem of giving lip service to women's rights, but not granting them, was apparent. In the literature of the period there were problems also. It would seem difficult for the literature to be "propagandist," dealing with problems of the time, and likewise be "escapist," trying to evade current problems. One could surmise then that the Victorian period was certainly one of duality. The Victorians frequently tended to believe in twos. For the Victorians, a circumstance would work in one instance and yet be totally unworkable in another.

Characteristic of the duality of the Age was Sybil; or, The Two Nations by Benjamin Disraeli, published in 1845. Disraeli was primarily concerned with the two distinct groups in England at the time, the rich and the poor. Disraeli asserted that the "Two Nations" hardly came in contact with each other, hardly spoke the same

language, and in general were hardly anything alike.[7] This could be seen at least, as a recognition of the severe Victorian duality.

Before the Victorian Era, Englishmen pitied or ignored the poor. In the Age, though, the poor were made to feel ashamed that they were poor, and made to feel that they were a blot on society.[8] E. P. Hood, the first person to use the word "Victorian" (1851), said in discussing cities:

> Already we have a revolution, slumbering but gathering power in all our cities, and still we pursue our way with intrepid stupidity, dreaming of Eden in the very midst of terror.[9]

G. M. Young elaborated on the conditions of English cities. In describing London in 1850, he said that it was noisy, as all the conveyances had iron tires instead of rubber ones. The atmosphere was murky, causing people to walk around with bleared eyes and smudgy faces from the fog. There were a great many poor children who had no shoes, traffic jams were common, and the shouting of harsh, hoarse voices could be heard everywhere.[10]

In a sense, the religion of the time exhibited the dual or twofold aspect primarily in the persons of the future

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[7]Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil; or, The Two Nations (New York, 1845), p. 76.

[8]Houghton, p. 184.

[9]Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities (London, 1963), p. 63.

[10]G. M. Young, Victorian Essays (London, 1962), p. 117.

Cardinal Manning, the future Archbishop Wilberforce, and expecially, John Henry Newman. Newman, in his leadership in the Oxford or Tractarian Movement, attempted to reform the Church of England from within. However, his primary contention, that men should go back before Henry VIII to find the roots of the Church, was misconstrued and his critics labelled Newman a heretic and a Roman Catholic. Thus, a schism occurred in the Anglican Church and people seemed forced to choose between remaining in the Church of England and converting to the Church of Rome, as Newman himself did finally.

For those churchmen remaining in the Anglican Church, Sir T. H. Doyle gave this advice:

> For this was still his simple plan,
> To have with clergymen to do
> As little as a Christian can.[11]

It was, however, a time of great zeal for the laymen. It was the custom that almost everyone went to church every Sunday and heard at least one sermon, sometimes two or three. The layman was not only zealous about listening to sermons, but also reading them. Walter Bagehot, one of the foremost Victorian political economists, spent his honeymoon reading sermons to his bride.[12] This exhibits the zeal and interest of the Victorians for sermons. It would be difficult to affirm, however, how much of the contents of the sermons were digested by the listeners and readers.

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[11]Charles Petrie, The Victorians (London, 1960), p. 228.

[12]Buckley, The Victorian Temper, p. 109.

The duality of religion certainly was closely allied with the duality associated with morals. For example, it is interesting to note the twofold rules for smoking and drinking. Men, and only men, were allowed to smoke, but not on the streets, in railway stations, in the military until 1856, and in the presence of a lady.[13] A self-respecting man could drink a pint of beer, but never enter a gin shop.[14] Tories drank Claret and Liberals drank Port, but these liquor rules did not apply to women who were not supposed to drink and to men of the lower economic and social class.

Probably the worst moral problem emanating from the Industrial Revolution was that of prostitution which was called "The Great Social Evil." It was estimated by the police in 1850 that there were at least 50,000 known prostitutes in England and 8,000 in Scotland. There were many books and articles written concerning the subject, but relatively little was actually done about it.[15] It is fairly easy to understand the cause of "The Great Social Evil" when factory conditions are examined. Many lower class women worked in the factories, which became very warm with the heat produced by the machines. Hence men

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[13]Petrie, p. 182.

[14]Young, Victorian Essays, p. 122.

[15]Houghton, p. 366.

and women alike, working closely together, removed as much of their clothing as possible for relief from the heat. The same thing occurred in the coal mines. The deplorable consequences of men and women working together in these conditions were many. Perhaps this is another reason for the many illegitimate babies which were born to these girls. Documents of the time also show that theft, excessive smoking, immoderate drinking, and cursing were common.[16] It should be noted that these are all things officially frowned upon by Victorians. A romantic but fairly accurate description of factory conditions for women can be found in Thomas Hood's poem of 1843, "The Song of the Shirt":

> Stitch! stitch! stitch!
> In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
> And still with a voice of dolorous pitch--
> Would that its tone could reach the rich!--
> She sang this "Song of the Shirt"![17]
> (11. 93-97)

It must be noted, though, that prostitution, "The Great Social Evil," was primarily predominate only in the lower class. Thus, it would seem that the highly zealous religious middle-class would enact reforms to alleviate this problem. Certainly the mid-century Victorians were shocked at women in industry, "and their only response was to declare

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[16]Petrie, p. 211.

[17]Gerald B. Woods, Homer A. Watt, George K. Anderson, The Literature of England (Chicago, 1948), p. 306.

that the place of all women, married or unmarried, was in the home."[18] This, of course, did not remedy the problem.

The Victorian Age, then, cannot be summed up in a few terse words saying that the people consistently believed and did one thing and not the other. Rather, when one makes almost any statement concerning the era, he must then make a statement which seems to negate the previous one. This is a consequence of the transition and flux of the period. It would seem, almost necessarily, that people clung to old values and at the same time accepted the new ones. This again suggests the duality of an era bordering on what is now called a "Modern Age," which has not been able to release the old. One can then see that Jerome Buckley's characteristics of the Age are not contradictory within themselves, but necessary for an Age where duality and double standards were employed, especially in economics, religion and morals.

It will therefore be the intent of this chapter to examine and define the characteristics or ideas prevalent in the Victorian Age and, in particular, the ideas associated with the mid-century Victorian period between the years 1845 and 1855. The conclusions arrived at in this first chapter will be examined in the light of a selection of the poetry covering the same time span of the three major poets of the period, Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold.

The next characteristic to consider is Victorian progress. Many critics of Victorian England feel that after

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[18]Petrie, p. 222

"God" the next most important Victorian word was "progress." Many people associate Thomas Carlyle with this doctrine, and certainly his contribution should not be minimized, but it would seem that the roots of the concept of progressivism should go back to the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century was very much aware of what A. O. Lovejoy has called The Great Chain of Being. Adam Ferguson in the eighteenth century used the concept of the Chain of Being to evolve a partial idea of progress. He believed that Man, unquestionably, was placed on the top of the social scale, but his progress was present even if it were very slow and almost undiscernible.[19] Possibly associated with the above statement could have been a common type of poem in the eighteenth century, the progress poem. Examples of this would be Thomas Gray's "The Progress of Poesy," Alexander Pope's "The Progress of Love," or William Hogarth's "Rakes Progress." This idea of progress, however, was not exactly the same concept as that of Victorian progress. Rather, the nineteenth century idea of progress was sliding and continuous, not step by step.[20]

The outstanding spokesman for the doctrine of progress was Thomas Carlyle. In Sartor Resartus Teufelsdröckh undergoes many experiences to be better able to understand himself,

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[19]Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, (Baltimore, 1934), p. 151.

[20]Geoffery Tillotson, Criticism and the Nineteenth Century (London, 1951), p. 201.

and, in effect, mankind. Carlyle probably made the outstanding comment on the Victorian age. Writing in 1830-31, he voiced his doctrine of progress--of looking ahead--when he said:

> "I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World or even Worldkin. Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work."[21]

Implicit in Carlyle's idea of progress were the ideas of work and duty. Carlyle convinced the Victorians that it was not only good to progress, but that it was their God-given duty to move forward with as much work as possible. Carlyle readily acknowledged his indebtedness to Imanual Kant's philosophy and, in particular, Kant's Categorical Imperative. Kant said that one should "act as if the maxim of thy will were to become, by thy adopting it, a universal law of nature."[22] This would suggest then that one would have the choice of acting or fulfilling the duty. Carlyle, however, adopting Kant's theory concerning duty, revised it in his own way. Carlyle seemed to disregard the freedom of choice implicit in Kant. Rather, Carlyle, in the person of

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[21]Thomas Carlyle, The Works of Thomas Carlyle, Vol. 12, Sartor Resartus (New York, 1897), p. 149.

[22]William Flemming, Vocabulary of Philosophy (New York, 1890, p. 59.

Teufelsdröckh, cried, "'Do the duty which lies nearest thee,' which thou knowest to be a Duty! The second Duty will already have become clear."[23] One could understand then that he should work, not solely to assure happiness to the society, but merely for the sake of working. This does not agree with Kant's philosophy, but certainly Carlyle did not always agree with Kant even though he acknowledged him as his master.

To understand the process that Teufelsdröckh underwent in Sartor Resartus, one must briefly examine a typically nineteenth century philosophical term, transcendentalism. Transcendentalism is a philosophy which would assert the reality of a world transcending space, matter, time, and logic. That is, Teufelsdröckh passed from the place of "The Everlasting No," where complete and utter rejection of all things was present, through "The Centre of Indifference" to "The Everlasting Yea" in which he accepted life and the world, and realized that his duty in life was to "Produce! Produce!" Implicit in this transcendental idea as Carlyle viewed it, was that God, the over-soul, or some sort of spirit was within each person, and through the noumena descending upon him, he understood his place in society. To be able to pass from "No" to "Yea" required what Carlyle called "Baphometic Baptism" or baptism by fire. This transcendental idea is important in the discussion of Victorian progress, because Teufelsdröckh, in "The Everlasting No," rejected society.

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[23]Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 148.

In "The Everlasting Yea," though, with the over-soul descending upon him, he felt it his duty to aid society in some way.[24] Thus, it could be said that the personal conversion which had occurred within him enabled him to turn his thoughts from himself and to consider all of humanity and not just himself.

This great drive for progress in the Age exhibited itself greatly in an increase of industrialization. According to the 1851 British census, England had 10,224,000 males and 10,736,000 females. Of this number there were 7,616,000 males and 8,155,000 females over the age of ten years who were potential wage earners.[25] There were then many workers to fill positions in which they were needed. The conditions in the factories were seldom desirable as has been discussed previously. The great rise of prostitution, "The Great Social Evil," was just one result of poor factory conditions. Poor

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[24]The incident occurred in Sartor Resartus when Teufelsdröckh was sitting on a mountain top which overlooked nine towns. Viewing the scene from his mountain, Teufelsdröckh suddenly felt the presence of God and felt the existence of God in nature.

> O Nature!--Or what is nature? Ha! why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the 'Living Garment of God'? O Heavens, is it, in very deed, He, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me? (Carlyle, Sartor Resartus p. 143.)

So the noumena had come down to him because Teufelsdröckh said later, "With other eyes, too, could I now look upon my fellow man; with an infinite Love, an infinite pity." (Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, p. 143.)

[25]Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England (London, 1962), p. 113.

urban housing, lack of educational facilities, and disease were also products of industrialization, the desire to "Produce! Produce!"

Progress was then required in enacting reforms which would aid the lower class workers. Thus, Antony Ashley Cooper, who felt that the governing class should care for the workers, was instrumental in passing the Factory Act of 1833. The Factory Act seems less than extraordinary to the twentieth century worker, but was revolutionary to the people of the nineteenth century. Included in its provisions was that anyone under eighteen years old could not work more than sixty-three hours a week, no more than nine hours a day, must have one-half hour for lunch, and must have two hours a day for school.[26] Also, in an effort to aid the lower class, model cities and experiments were designed. Illustrative of these was Robert Owens's New Lanark where derelicts of all sorts were given work.[27] James Silk Buckingham's model city of "Victoria" was never fully developed, but gave ideas to planners for other cities.[28]

One of the greatest social-labor movements in mid-century Victorian times was the Chartist Movement. Beginning

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[26]David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1962), p. 113.

[27]Thomson, p. 45.

[28]Briggs, Victorian Cities, p. 71. "Victoria" was an effort to remedy the problems of the cities. Buckingham proposed zoning, garden spaces, a Roman forum in the center of town, electric lights, fresh air, and good views from all apartments.

much earlier, the movement came to full flower in 1848. The Chartists called for universal male suffrage, equal electoral districts, removal of property qualifications for parliament members, payment for Parliament members, secret ballots, and annual elections. Many torchlight ceremonies and meetings were held to boost the movement. This then was the first widespread effort of the working class self-help. These and other reforms did not solve the problems of the cities, industry, and society in general, but some progress was being made toward a solution.

Education also had many reforms or attempts at reform during this period. In an attempt to aid the male workers, Maurice established the Working Men's College. This exhibited an interest in the middle-class men, as it was adult education for those men who had jobs during the day. One critic has said that this was one of the first movements toward English socialism.[29]

The workers, however, were not the only group to be affected by educational reforms. In 1850 many criticisms were made concerning the universities. Thus the Oxford Commission was established to investigate higher learning. Several interesting facts were uncovered. First, the Commission said that the old curriculum was too narrow since boys were being assigned to the study of the church, law, and teaching, but

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[29]Buckley, The Victorian Temper, p. 122.

not to the study of business, which was a big reason for the attendance of middle-class boys in universities.[30] The Commission also discovered that there were many nonresident instructors who were paid to teach, but who never taught. It must be stated that one good result of the Commission was that fellowships and scholarships were opened to free competition.[31] Jewett testified before the Commission that the public wanted "quiet, and cheap education, and extension of studies, and to bury forever our ecclesiastical differences."[32] The "ecclesiastical differences" were not "buried" immediately. The Bachelor of Arts degree could not be taken without the Anglican religious tests until after 1854-56, but one still had to be an Anglican to be a member of a university governing body until 1871.[33]

There was very little education for women because the prime responsibilities of a Victorian woman were courtship and marriage. "To get ready for the marriage market a girl was trained like a race horse."[34] Middle-class girls had to learn music, drawing, and French administered by a governess at home or at a boarding school. Even though girls learned

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[30]P. C. Roach, "Victorian Universities and the National Intellegentsia," Victorian Studies, III (1959), 135.

[31]Ibid., 135.

[32]Ibid., 140.

[33]Ibid., 141.

[34]Petrie, p. 199.

how to attract men, they were not taught about the practical tasks of marriage. In addition, girls were not prepared for motherhood with any semblance of sex education. It is thought that men were to blame for this because they demanded total ignorance from their women. The dependence of the girl upon her father was transferred to her husband upon marriage.[35] The mores concerning the sexes were, at best, strained and regulated. A woman was required to be accompanied by either her father, husband, or a man old enough to be her grandfather in a hansom cab. Otherwise, her reputation would certainly suffer. It was also believed that an unmarried man and woman should never be alone unless engaged because the man might take advantage of the woman. In addition, if an engagement was broken, it was the girl who suffered, since men were not usually considered at fault in such matters.[36] And it was of prime importance that divorce was never mentioned in public.[37] It was, however, almost impossible for a woman to obtain a divorce. The only way was "aggravated adultery." Obtaining a divorce was made even more difficult

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[35]Petrie, pp. 205-6.

[36]A good study of this problem is seen in George Meredith's The Egoist.

[37]Ibid., pp. 199-200.

since the price to obtain it was prohibitive for most women.[38] As Queen Victoria said when asked her opinion concerning women in medicine, "Let women be what God intended; a helpmate for man--but with totally different duties and vocations."[39]

It is evident, therefore, that there was a chain reaction associated with progress in the Victorian period. Carlyle preached the doctrine of progress in the 1830's and, in an approximate twenty year period, the factories inspired by Carlyle had produced social problems which required progress and effort to correct. The Victorians were a forward looking people in regard to economics and the betterment of men. Women, however, tended to suffer, as the reader may have gathered earlier, which may seem strange with a woman such as Victoria ruling the kingdom.

Any discussion of Victorianism traditionally should include the various charges against Victorian hypocrisy; many critics enjoy dwelling on this. The Victorians exercised omission and evasion sexually, religiously, economically, and educationally. The Victorians did tend to say and do what they believed to be the "right" things, but often sacrificed sincerity for propriety. "Conformity, moral pretension, and evasion--these are the hallmarks of Victorian hypocrisy."[40]

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[38] Ibid., p. 207.

[39] John W. Cunliffe, Leaders of the Victorian Revolution (New York, 1934), pp. 9-10.

[40] Houghton, pp. 394-5.

The Victorians, despite their progressive ideas in many important areas, were not likely to "rock the boat" when it came to time-honored traditions. The problem arose, however, that the Victorians, more often than not, did not really understand why they observed the traditions that they held sacred.[41] In this area Kingsley was concerned about the Victorians and their material concerns. In his sermon "God and Mammon" he stated:

> It is most sad, but most certain, that we are like the Pharisees of old in this...that we too have made up our mind that we can serve God and Mammon at once; that the very classes among us who are most utterly given up to money making, are the very classes which, in all denominations, make the loudest religious profession; that our churches and chapels are crowded on Sundays by people whose souls are set the whole week through, upon gain and nothing but gain.[42]

The Victorians were also troubled greatly by problems such as reconciling the "dirtiness" of sex and religion, the "two nations" that Disraeli discussed, and the ugliness of human nature. Thus, they had

> a fear of disagreeable facts, and conscious shrinking from clearness of light, which keep us from examining ourselves, and increase gradually into a species of instintive terror at all truth, and love of glosses, veils, and decorative lies of every sort.[43]

The Victorians then merely looked the other way, so they would not see the unpleasantries which disturbed them. Thomas Bowdler tried to "improve" Shakespeare's plays by omitting "words and

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[41] Ibid., p. 397.

[42] Houghton, p. 405.

[43] John Ruskin, Modern Painters, 3 (1856), pt. IV, Chap. 4, sec. 3 Works (London, 1904), p. 71.

expressions which cannot with propriety be read in a family." Also, The Ladies' Pocket Book of Etiquette published in 1833 stated that the girl should guard herself against "the pollution of the Waltz."[44] One of the classic statements made by Queen Victoria occurred when Lord Melbourne had indulged in a slightly questionable joke. Victoria said, "We are not amused."[45]

The factories which embodied so well the idea of progress also embodied the concept of hypocrisy. The assumption under which the factory owner was working was merely making money for himself, but this did not agree with Carlyle when he asked man to be a "Worldkin," one interested in all the world, not just in himself. The main idea of Carlyle's transcendental philosophy was that the oversoul aided man to aid other men, not just himself. Thus, the lower-class workers were the ones to suffer from this so-called progress, and instead of progressing, they regressed further and further down the social and economic ladder.

So this was a time of pretense, deceit, and hypocrisy, but one might wonder, "How many of the people were fooled by the hypocrite?" Perhaps not too many people were duped because they themselves were playing the game of hypocrisy and knew the tricks as well as the next person. The Victorians

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[44]Cunliffe, p. 24.

[45]Ibid., p. 25.

were hypocritical, but what generation, what age, what person is not in some respects hypocritical? Perhaps the twentieth century has dwelled so much on the Victorian hypocrisy because doing so is a natural antipathetic reaction. It is common for a child to criticize his parents as being old-fashioned and wrong in many areas. Also, it is the folly of youth often to see the moats in the adult's eyes and overlook the beams in his own eyes. No one ever attacked the Victorians as much as they themselves.

> The very fact that they saw the period as one of radical transition made the major thinkers acutely conscious of their age and highly sensitive to the loss of old values or the adoption of new ones that seemed to spell a deterioration of the moral and intellectual life. The commercial spirit, the exaltation of force, the marriage market, the insincerities of conformity, moral pretensions, and evasion--all of these Victorian weaknesses were recognized and attacked more clearly and vigorously than anyone today exposes the shortcomings of our time.[46]

It must be remembered throughout the remainder of this study that the Victorians were living in a new age, the prelude to the twentieth century. The Age was also an end to the old times what with the break up of the Great Chain of Being, new methods of making money, and a rising social class, the middle class. Thus, with many innovations coming to the fore, the Victorians were often confused. It was difficult for them to completely cast off the old ways and accept the new. Hypocrisy resulted, but not merely for the sake of

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[46]Houghton, p. 424.

hypocrisy alone. Certainly, the Victorians were sincere in their desire to understand the world in which they lived and, more particularly, themselves. Sincerity, it could be argued, is the opposite of hypocrisy, and it might be difficult to be hypocritical and sincere simultaneously. This, however, seemed to be the situation in Victorian England when people were striving to understand themselves and cared about this understanding more than in previous eras.

Manifestations of Victorians' self-understanding were their self-expressions, their literary and artistic tastes and use of leisure time. With many inventions and easier methods of accomplishing things came more time to spend in self-expression and enjoyment. By twentieth century standards, the Victorian's tastes are often thought execrable. Owen Jones, a critic of the Age, said:

> We have no principles, no unity; the architect, the upholsterer, the paper stainer, the weaver, the calico-printer, and the potter run each their independent course; each struggles fruitlessly, each produces in art novelty without beauty, or beauty without intelligence.[47]

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[47]Buckley, The Victorian Temper, p. 129. See also Appendix One for illustration of the centerpiece designed by Prince Albert for Queen Victoria. Other attempts by Prince Albert to set Victorian taste seemed to fail badly also, by modern standards. Albert redecorated a portion of the palace by decorating three different rooms in three different styles which were Pompeian, Romantic, and Raphaelite. He also loved animals, so he had images of animals in every conceivable place.

In this confusion of taste and art, there evolved three theories of art. The first group felt that criticism and art "could be based on the methods of mathematics and literal observation." Included in this group were David Ramsay Hay, Ford Maddox Brown, William Holman Hunt, and others. These people were primarily literalists. The second group ran counter to the literalists "by adopting a more intuitive and emotional "approach." Included here were Pater, Whistler, Wilde, and Symons. Finally, the last group was a fusion of the previous two. Ruskin, Rossetti, and Swinburne were members of this group. Rossetti is the prime example as his poetry was often literal, but his paintings were usually etherial.[48]

At last, a few words should be said concerning the literature of the period in general. The writers of the period tended to be eclectic. They were not imitators, but rather borrowers from all ages.[49] The basis for all Victorian nature poetry was the "nostalgia for a lost world of peace and companionship of healthy bodies and quiet minds."[50]

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[48]Robert Peters, Victorians on Literature and Art (London, 1964), pp. 1-3.

[49]Austin Wright, Victorian Literature (New York, 1961), p. 17.

[50]Inge, p. 49.

It was logical for the Victorians to be interested in the past because of the turmoil of their own age. Revivals of the Greek, Gothic, and Renaissance are seen in the poetry of Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold. Browning read old manuscripts to obtain exact reference of Italian, Spanish, French, or Palestinian backgrounds for his monologues. Tennyson studied Dante and Greek mythology for "Ulysses," Anglo-Saxon times for Harold, Tudor history for Queen Mary, and medieval romances for Idylls of the King. Arnold studied travel books, histories, and literary journals of the ancient Persian tale of Rustum, the Scandinavian myth of Balder, and the medieval legends of Tristram and Saint Branden.[51]

William Inge says, "Literature flourishes best when it is half a trade and half an art; and here again the Victorian Age occupies the most favorable part of the curve."[52] During the Victorian Age, authors often became prophets and each great author had his following. Examples of this are shown first by Peter Bayne who published Lessons from My Masters: Carlyle, Tennyson, Ruskin. The support of Browning was also exhibited in the 1880's when the Browning Societies were founded.[53] William Inge further says:

> The Victorians now extended the imaginative sensibility, which had been expended on nature and history, to the life of the individual. This meant that the novel instead of the poem was to be the characteristic means of

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[51]Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Triumph of Time (Cambridge, 1966), p. 17

[52]Inge, p. 49.

[53]Houghton, pp. 101-2.

> literary expression; and even the chief Victorian poets, Tennyson and Browning, are sometimes novelists in verse.[54]

Probably most typical of leisure activities of the period were the picnic and traveling. The picnic came into existence in the Romantic Movement and increased in popularity later in the century.[55] Closely associated with the picnic was traveling. The Victorian traveled extensively abroad, not so much because of his love of culture, but because it was generally the "thing to do." The majority of Victorian travel literature pictured the traveler as being very individualistic. That is, he "threw his weight around," so to speak. He was proud that he was English and desired that the world be cognizant of the fact.[56]

The railroad was a leading cause of increased travel. Petrie has said that the railroad brought the Victorian Period in and the motor car took it out.[57] The railroads certainly flourished during the period between 1830 and 1850. The first stage was between 1825 and 1835 when fifty-four Railway Acts were passed in Parliament. These dealt primarily with the regulation of trade. The second stage occurred between 1844 and 1847. Most of these acts were in favor of the railway as opposed to steamship and canal travel. The proponents of water

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[54]Inge, p. 37.

[55]Petrie, p. 164.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., p. 13.

transportation, of course, hated the railways, but it seemed that the rails always won. By 1848, there were five-thousand miles of railway in England.[58] Still Prince Albert would not allow Victoria to ride trains in the first years of their married life. The incident is recorded of Albert's riding the train. When the train got up to thirty miles per hour Albert said to the conductor, "Not quite so fast next time, Mr. Conductor, if you please." Finally in 1842 Queen Victoria was allowed to ride on a train. Her remark was only, "Charming."[59] Thus were the rails finally regarded as permissible in England.

No doubt the epitome of mid-century Victorianism was The Great Exhibition of 1851 housed in The Crystal Palace. It was the desire of the Society of Arts to exhibit the great works, artistic and industrial, of the times. Thus, Joseph Paxton suggested to the Royal Commission that an edifice be erected of glass and steel. The plan, revolutionary as it was, was accepted readily.

The Crystal Palace could symbolize the characteristics of Victorians heretofore discussed. First, the duality, which was exemplified by Disraeli's Two Nations was manifest in the Palace. The "twoness" was represented in two materials used in the construction of the building, steel and glass.

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[58]Thomson, p. 41.

[59]Cunliffe, p. 23.

It should be noted that steel is one of the most difficult materials to break. It is impervious to almost any type of stress. Glass, however, especially in Victorian times before tempered glass was invented, was quite subject to breakage. These strong and weak materials were combined, however, to produce a magnificent structure which was the pride of the Western world for almost one-hundred years just as Victorian England was magnificent in its time.

Second, the progress of the Victorian Age was exemplified by both the structure and the contents of the building. The Palace was a marvel of creative and industrial ingenuity, and many of the contents displayed the industrial progress of the Age, satisfying Carlyle's pleas, "Produce! Produce!" As discussed earlier, transcendentalism was implicit in this theory of progress. This is voiced by Albert in the sanction of the Exhibition:

> Say not the discoveries we make are our own--
> The germs of every art are implanted within us,
> And God our instructor, out of that which is concealed,
> Develops the faculties of invention.[60]

This is true since the transcendentalists felt that each person possessed "the facilities of invention," and, if the noumena comes down from God or some sort of oversoul, he will be able to further society. This then was implicit in The Exhibition and indeed its sanction.

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[60]Buckley, The Victorian Temper, p. 125.

Third, the hypocrisy of the Age was shown in The Great Exhibition by comparing the physical structure of the building, constructed of glass and steel, to a great many of the contents of the building. The Palace itself was quite functional and proved to be able to withstand rain and hail. Not until 1936 was it consumed by fire and destroyed. By twentieth century standards, however, many of the articles exhibited inside this architectural marvel were horrible. Pieces were ill-proportioned, encrusted with reclining elephants and great griffons. There were many drawered chests and much papier mâché furniture.[61] The Victorians became over-enthusiastic about new devices such as upholstery. "The once padded furniture of the eighteenth century was padded, sprung, and upholstered until it lost all recognizable shape or beauty.[62] These pieces show, in many instances, poor artistic taste of the period and also the hypocritical solidarity of the building and the frailness of its contents as exemplified by the papier mâché furniture.

Finally, one must remember that the organizers of The Exhibition and the citizens in general were genuine and sincere in their desire to display their products of mid-century Victorian progress. Many Englishmen traveled long distances to view The Crystal Palace in its construction, and even more

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[61] Ibid., p. 128.

[62] Thomson, p. 116.

traveled further to see the finished product. Thomas Babington Macaulay said, looking at The Great Exhibition with tears in his eyes:

> This will long be remembered as a singularily happy year of peace, plenty, good feeling, innocent pleasure, national glory of the best and purest sort.[63]

This was, generally, the optimism voiced during the time of The Great Exhibition and between the years 1845 to 1855. Later in the Victorian Period, however, Matthew Arnold in "Dover Beach" characterized the time differently:

> ...a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.
> (ll. 35-37)[64]

It will then be the "duty" of this study to discuss how the three major poets of the time conformed or did not conform with the definition of mid-century Victorianism: duality, progress, and hypocrisy, and where applicable the influence of Victorianism on their writings.

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[63]William A. Madden, "The Victorian Sensibility," Victorian Studies, VII (1963), 81.

[64]Matthew Arnold, The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold, C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (eds.) (New York; 1950), p. 212.

CHAPTER II

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Alexander Pope have been compared quite favorably. Each "assimilated the common knowledge of his England and willingly....subjected current themes and values to his controlled craftsmanship."[1] Thus, the discussion of a selection of the mid-century Victorian poetry of Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold should begin with a discussion of the poetry of Tennyson, the Poet Laureate of the era. Basically, Tennyson's achievements are four in number:

> (1) Tennyson "is never cut off from images, and they often revive our interest when his ideas are deadening." (2) Tennyson was a master in creating "difficult" feelings, "morbid" thought, "and the more fully he lets himself go in this direction, the better he is." This is exemplified quite well in the mad scenes of "Maud." (3) Tennyson had an excellent rhetorical ability, as one can particularly see in "Maud" and in "In Memoriam." (4) Finally, Tennyson could be called "a poet of the classical Renaissance." The writers in the Renaissance were primarily interested in man in his place in society and, in general, strove to understand him. Thus, Tennyson had great human insight similar to that of the Renaissance. This also is shown in the character transformation of the hero in "Maud."[2]

It will then be the purpose of this chapter to discuss the role of Tennyson in the Age and the influence of the Age

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[1]Jerome H. Buckley, Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet (Cambridge, 1960), p. 68.

[2]Oliver Elton, Tennyson (Liverpool, 1901), pp. 17-21.

upon him. Three poems--"The Princess," "In Memoriam," and "Maud"--will then be examined in the light of the characteristics of mid-century Victorianism determined in Chapter One: duality, progress, and hypocrisy.

DUALITY

A changing and evolving era results, generally, in many paradoxes and duality in many areas. The Laureate himself was thus a product of this duality. W. H. Mallock said that Tennyson was "at once a mirror and a burning glass."[3] In other words, Tennyson was a mirror of the Age and an influence upon the Age. Such duality was demonstrated in "The Princess," published in 1847. Even the genesis of the poem is under question. The idea of a university for women might have arisen when the concept was being popularily discussed, as the poet discussed the concept with his wife in 1839. Or the idea could have arisen from a joke of the Apostles while Tennyson was at Cambridge.[4] Either alternative could be correct.

Probably one of the more obvious dualities of "The Princess" is the changing of roles and the disguises. Princess Ida is betrothed to the Prince, but the Prince is unable to claim the Princess because she is secluded in her univer-

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[3]Paull F. Baum, Tennyson Sixty Years After (London, 1963), p. 269.

[4]Hallam, Lord Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir, Vol. I (London, 1897), pp. 247-248.

sity where, as Lilia envisioned in "The Prologue,"

> I would make it death
> For any male thing but to keep at us.
> (Prologue, ll. 150-151)[5]

To claim his bride, the Prince and his friends, Cyril and Florian, decide to masquerade as women to gain admission to the university. The women in residence are very large and the statues are

> --not of those that men desire,
> Sleek Odalisques, or oracles of mode,
> Nor stunted squaws of West or East; but she
> That taught the Sabine how to rule, and she
> The foundress of the Babylonian wall....
> (Pt. II, ll. 62-66)

There is then a reversal of the ancient and typically Victorian concept of the places of men and women which held that women should be subservient to men. This reversal of the roles of men and women was utilized by Tennyson, however, finally to emphasize that women must not dominate men and that love should dominate such relationships. One assumes that Tennyson intended this reversal of roles to be so ludicrous to his Victorian audience that they would readily see his point.

In "The Princess" Tennyson employed much the same type of contrasts as he had used previously in his landscape poetry, contrasting such things as the land the sea. The poet, however, shifted the opposites of natural setting to

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[5]Alfred Tennyson, The Complete Poetical Works of Tennyson, Cambridge Edition (Boston, 1898). All other quotations from Tennyson's poetry will be taken from this edition with part and line numbers in parenthesis.

that of characterization. The weak Prince is set against the strong Princess; the weak southern king against the strong northern king; the loving mother, Psyche, and the emotionally uncomprising daughter, Ida; and the "common-sensical" Cyril and idealistic Prince. The poem is then a poem of opposites, but these polarities Tennyson reconciles with the power of love.[6]

The personality of Princess Ida clearly exhibits a dual nature. At one time she is a wonderful and lovely woman, but at other times she is the type of woman most men would shy away from.[7] As Ida greets the Prince and his two friends disguised as women, she explains the foundations of the university:

> To this great work, we purposed with ourself
> Never to wed. You likewise will do well,
> Ladies, in entering here, to cast and fling
> The tricks which make us toys of men....
> (Pt. II, ll. 46-49)

After ordering the "girls" to relinquish their feminity she addresses them concerning knowledge:

> Embrace our aims; work out your freedom
> Girls,
> Knowledge is now no more a fountain seal'd
> Drink deep, until the habits of the slave,
> The sins of emptiness, gossip and spite
> and slander, die.
> (Pt. II, ll. 75-79)

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[6]Clyde de L Ryals, Theme and Symbols in Tennyson's Poems (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 178.

[7]Henry Van Dyke, The Poetry of Tennyson (New York, 1915), p. 116.

This certainly is not the typically domestic wife or "helpmate," as Victoria called her.

The change comes very slowly to Ida, but when she finally realizes her love for the Prince, she is very different from previously:

> and all
> Her falser self slipt from her like a robe,
> And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
> Then in her mould that other, when she came
> From barren deeps to conquer all with love....
> (Pt. VII, 11. 145-149)

Thus Ida discovers that:

> seeing either sex alone
> Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
> Nor equal, nor unequal.
> (Pt. VII, 11. 83-85)

The poem then is not concerned solely with higher education for women, but with Tennyson's view of marriage, and through the duality of Princess Ida he points this out extensively.

The character of the Prince is also dual in nature; not, however, because there is a transformation as with Ida, but because of the "weird seizures." These seizures are much like Tennyson himself experienced in the early 1840's which were nervous in origin and described as catalysis.[8] It is believed that the seizures, inserted in the 1851 edition of "The Princess," were included to point up the Prince's

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[8]Valerie Pitt, Tennyson Laureate (Toronto, 1963), p. 26. Tennyson described this condition as a "waking trance" in which he had a distinct feeling of individuality. In this "boundless state" he repeated his own name two or three times silently. This state did not last long. (Memoir, p. 320).

"comparative want of power."[9] That is, this was another method employed by the poet to minimize the male and strengthen the female as was so atypical of the period.

So far in the discussion of the poem, the title has been referred to as merely "The Princess." The full title, however, is "The Princess; A Medley." The full title should not be disregarded because a medley suggests duality. Certainly, an age of fusion and turmoil might give rise to eclectic thought in art. The setting was

> A Gothic ruin and a Grecian house,...
> (Prologue, l. 225)

This was chosen so that Tennyson might circumvent his own age and not have to place the poem purely on a sociological level.[10] If the poem were viewed further away in point of time and setting, the audience might accept it more readily. The combination between the fairy story and the comment on "an age of unprecedented progress in science and engineering" was astounding to some readers.[11] And finally the medley included what the eighteenth century audience would have frowned upon, but what was more accepted in Victorian times, the

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[9] Memoir, p. 251.

[10] Ryals, p. 166.

[11] John Killham, Tennyson and The Princess (London; 1958), p. 268.

mingled drama.[12] That is, there is a mixture of both comic and serious elements in the poem. Some critics feel that the comedy reduces the effectiveness of the work, but others feel that a scene with Ida falling into the water is intended for poetic effect to minimize the Princess's character and to reveal her inherent weakness. The latter is more nearly correct.

From 1847, the next year to consider is 1850, the year which saw the publication of what most critics feel is Tennyson's masterpiece, "In Memoriam A. H. H." In this poem Tennyson questions many beliefs and seeks to find some consolation within himself after the untimely death of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam. Here too, one is able to see duality in many aspects.

The first noteworthy duality is that of the main character, "I." It would seem that Hallam should be the principle subject, but Tennyson often referred to the poem as "The Way of the Soul." Thus, Tennyson's own soul tends to capture the spotlight. The "I," however, seems to change from being Tennyson himself to the whole human race.[13] The poet says:

> That 'loss is common to the race'....
> (VI, stanza 1)

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[12]Ralph M. Wardle, Lecture, March 6, 1967. The playgoers of the eighteenth century thought highly of Joseph Addison's play, "Cato." One reason for this was that it was not a mingled play. Later in the century though, Samuel Johnson said that the mingled drama was correct since life was never either comedy or drama. Life is a mingling. (Wardle, Lecture, April 24, 1967).

[13]Hugh I'Anson Fausset, Tennyson: A Modern Portrait (London, 1923), p. 147.

Thus, the loss of Hallam is great to Tennyson, but the poet envisions the whole world suffering with him. In addition to Hallam's being dead, others have also died.

Continuing further with Hallam, one must note his dual nature. At the beginning of the poem, Tennyson feels the great and utter loss of a good friend, Hallam. By the end of the poem, however, the "I" says this about his friend:

> My love involves the love before;
> My love is vaster passion now;
> Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,
> I seem to love thee more and more.
> (CXXX, stanza 3)

Thus, one can see that Hallam the man has been changed into a Christ-like figure, since he is "mix'd with God" and suggests the Father-Son idea in the Trinity.

And yes, even the powers of nature are dual for the grieving Tennyson. In part II, it seems almost as if Tennyson is upset because of the permanence of the yew tree.

> The seasons bring the flower again,
> And bring the firstling to the flock;
> And in the dusk of thee the clock
> Beats out the little lives of men.
>
> O, not for thee the glow, the bloom
> Who changest not in any gale,
> Nor branding summer sun avail
> To touch thy thousand years of gloom....
> (II, stanzas 2, 3)

The clock "beats" out the little lives of men," but the yew tree remains for "thousand years of gloom." It would seem then that the poet does not understand how a yew tree is able to last for a thousand years and a great man with such great potential as Hallam is dead in such a few years.

One main problem in the poem is, as has been touched on briefly before, that of doubt versus faith. Tennyson was bothered by the problem of a God who would allow a man such as Hallam to die. Thus, there are the dual forces working throughout the poem of doubt and faith. In an attempt to understand the present and the future, Tennyson visited his past. That is, he returned to Cambridge where he and Hallam were happiest together. In times of uncertainty many people tend to cling to the past for assurance.[14] (This accounts for much of the nostalgia found in Victorian literature.) His visitation to Cambridge brings some sort of escape from his grief for Hallam as he visits their old room, the woods where they roamed, and remembers their discussions. All this, however, does not really permanently alleviate Tennyson's great sadness.

> Ah, dear, but come thou back to me!
> Whatever change the years have wrought,
> I find not yet one lovely thought
> That cries against my wish for thee.
> (XC, stanza 6)

The poet finally achieves the faith he so reverently wished for, and probably this is best exemplified by two ceremonies, one at the beginning, the other at the end of the poem. The ceremony at the beginning is Hallam's funeral, and Tennyson feels complete emptiness because of the absence of his friend.

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[14]Jerome H. Buckley, The Triumph of Time (Cambridge; 1966), p. 105.

> Tears of the widower, when he sees
> A late--lost form that sleep reveals,
> And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
> Her place is empty, fall like these....
> (XIII, stanza 1)

The ceremony, however, at the end of the poem is that not of death, but of life--a marriage.

> And, moved thro' life of lower phase,
> Result in man, be born and think
> And act and love, a closer link
> Betwixt us and the crowning race....
> (CXXXI, stanza 32)

Thus, the dual problems of doubt and faith are coupled with dual ceremonies which are indicative of them. The poet, voicing a typically Victorian problem of doubt and faith, symbolizes his eventual faith with the ceremony of marriage.

In his later movement from doubt to faith, Tennyson seems to move in two conflicting directions at once, away from dependence on Hallam and toward reunification with Hallam. These conflicting directions are not really conflicting though when one considers the dual aspects of Hallam. Certainly Tennyson does move from dependence upon Hallam, the man. But he moves closer to a reunification with Hallam, his savior. Thus, Tennyson moves from the temporal Hallam to the spiritual Hallam.[15]

After Tennyson's success with "In Memoriam" he wrote other works, but the poem to consider next is "Maud" which was published in 1855. This poem, Tennyson's favorite, was certainly

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[15]Ryals, p. 205.

not universally liked by his Victorian audience. Here again, the reader is able to find a Victorian duality.

It has been said that the hero in "Maud" is Tennyson's best developed character. Certainly the character of the hero exhibits duality in his fluctuations between sanity and insanity. It is also curious to note that out of the hero's disturbed mind comes his desire to fight in the Crimean War, in other words, to create social order through a necessary chaos.

> Throughout "Maud" war in some sort is the expression of unreason in the self or the society, a restless passion which may be turned to good or evil purposes.[16]

The character also of Maud herself is one of duality. The hero describes her thus:

> Maud, with her venturous climbings and
> tumbles and childish escapes,
> Maud, the delight of the village, the ringing joy of the Hall,
> Maud with her sweet pure-mouth when
> My father dangled the grapes,
> Maud, the beloved of my mother, the
> Moon-faced darling of all,--
>
> What is she now? My dreams are bad.
> She may bring me a curse.
> (Pt. I, ll. 69-73)

In addition, she is described by the hero as:

> Queen lily and rose in one....
> (Pt. I. l. 905)

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[16]Buckley, The Growth of a Poet, p. 142.

This indicates both her purity symbolized by the lily and her passion symbolized by the rose. It must be remembered, however, that the narrator of the "monodrama" is the hero who is sometimes irrational and who is always prejudiced in respect to Maud.

One phase of the duality of "Maud" could be advanced if one were to look at the financial status of Maud and the hero. The hero is from a family in which the father had lost money in speculation and had committed suicide:

> But that old man, now lord of the broad
> estate and the Hall,
> Dropt off gorged from a scheme that had
> left us flaccid and drain'd.
> (Pt. I, ll. 19-20)

Maud, on the other hand, is from a family of means.

The hero strongly desired Maud, on one level, for herself. This might, however, be viewed on another level by the end of the poem. The poor hero could symbolize all the poor of England, and Maud could represent the old aristocracy. It might be remembered that the wealthy were unconcerned about the world. Instead of concerning themselves about the problems of the world, the leaders had a party.

> A grand political dinner
> To the men of many acres.
> A gathering of the Tory,
> A dinner and then a dance
> For the maids and marriage-makers,
> And every eye but mine will glance
> At Maud in all her glory.
>
> For I am not invited....
> (Pt. I, ll. 817-824)

It should be noted that the politicians were concerned about girls, marriage, and fun. It was, however, the hero who became concerned enough about the world to try to rectify it. In dedication, he states:

> Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims....
>
> (Pt. III, l. 38)

Tennyson, in portraying two separate people, is portraying also two separate social classes. He is making a comment on which social class he feels will some day lead the world. This would seem logical if one looked at the temper of the times with the dwindling away of the aristocracy and the rising of the middle-class.

Thus, one is able to see the duality of Tennyson's poems. It would seem in a period of great paradoxes that the spokesman for the crown might employ those paradoxes, which he did.

PROGRESS

The concept of the progress was ever present and ever important to the life and literature of the Victorians from the time Carlyle instilled enthusiasm with his "Produce! Produce!" Also typical of the nineteenth century was the conversion similar to that of Teufelsdrockh in Sartor Resartus. Thus, Tennyson's three mid-century poems display this same technique or aspect. Transcendentalism is certainly displayed in all three works, but in various ways.

The typical transcendental movement of the conversion

of Princess Ida in "The Princess" is a conversion similar to Teufelsdröckh's in that she, as is generally accepted in such conversions, passes from an area of rejection to one of acceptance of the world and the awareness of her duty on earth. It will be remembered that Ida feels that she could right the wrongs perpetrated against women by isolating herself from the world in her sterile educational society. Tennyson disputes this, however:

> Indeed he insists in prophetically modern terms, that the essential nature of the individual can be known only in relationship, not in isolation.[17]

It is important to remember that Princess Ida does not accept this conversion until she faces a catastrophe, that of the Prince's being near death. The Princess cares for the Prince, she remembers all those things which she held dearly before her self-imposed exile. She feels that she exists in only half a world and that her world lacks love.

Women's education in Victorian society should now be discussed. Certainly the concepts of higher education for women and the betterment of conditions for women were in the air. This was also an era of sociological models such as New Lanark and James Silk Buckingham's model city, "Victoria." Thus, it does not seem surprising that Tennyson would write a poem which included a model university for women.

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[17]Elton Edward Smith, The Two Voices: A Tennyson Study (Lincoln; 1964), p. 167.

> Projects of a Woman's College were in the air, and it was well to profess advanced opinions on these topics, provided they did not lead to the unsettlement of any young girl's mind or endanger the purity of the home.[18]

Many people took the above attitude concerning woman's education, but many took a more liberal attitude. Princess Ida feels that the aim of those in the university was that of knowledge. Another lecturer at the university delivers a tirade concerning equality of sexes. She predicts that women and men would some day be equal in government, business, philosophy, and the arts. And yes, she also includes:

> Two heads in council, two beside the hearth....
> (pt. II, l. 155)

Thus, Ida wants completely to equate man and woman, but neglects woman's need for love and children. When "her true womanliness appears...she finds herself again in right relations with the world."[19]

Tennyson then takes the middle-ground in relation to education for women and marriage. Tennyson sees the relationship between the sexes in the following way:

> seeing either sex alone
> Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
> Nor equal, nor unequal. Each fulfills
> Defect in each, and always thought in
> thought,
> Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow....
> (Pt. VII, ll. 83-87)

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[18]Fausset, p. 128.

[19]Alfred Tennyson, The Princess, Franklin T. Baker (ed.) (New York, 1904), p. xxii.

Tennyson felt that the sooner society learns the relationship of men and women, the more progress will take place.[20] Hence, Tennyson was as Carlyle, a proponent of progress, but they differed in certain respects.

> Carlyle saw the follies and iniquities of the world through a lurid magnifying glass; he prophesied ruin like an ancient seer, and called down the wrath of God upon knaves and idiots; while Tennyson's inclination was towards indulgence of human frailty and hope in the slow betterment of the world.[21]

Thus, as Princess Ida discovers, the only way to understand one's self is through love. Love enables one to bridge the "gulf between self and the external world...."[22] Certainly then, love is the answer for Ida in that she learns that knowledge is only half a life. Thus, she passes from the "self" to the "not self," from the "No" to the "Yea."

"In Memoriam" voices an idea similar to "The Princess" concerning the conversion experience. "In Memoriam," however, seems to have much more universal appeal as it seems more far reaching than the marriage ideas in "The Princess," in that all people of all stations have lost or will lose a loved one. This poem would be a consolation to them. To the Victorian reader the poem worked out the problems which bothered them. Just before the death of Archbishop Benson, he wrote that the poem was

> inexpressibly dear to me for the best part of my life. It came out just when my mother and Harriet died. I

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[20] Memoir, p. 249.

[21] Alfred Lyall, Tennyson (New York, 1907), p. 62.

[22] Ryals, p. 173.

sank into it and rose with it, and I used to teach--to love it.[23]

Previously in "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind" Tennyson used sleep to escape the world of reality. Sleep, however, in "In Memoriam" is not used entirely for escape. Earlier in the poem Tennyson affirms that

> It is better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.
> (XXVII, stanza 4)

Thus, he voices his feeling that he is and must be a part of the human race and not like the lady in the tower in "The Lady of Shallot" before she left the tower to join civilization.

It would seem that the moment of awareness for Tennyson was similar to that of Teufelsdröckh. The reader will remember the incident when Teufelsdröckh was sitting on the mountain viewing the city and suddenly felt that he was part of civilization. Tennyson voices the same idea when he experiences a mystical experience concerning Hallam:

> So word by word, and line by line,
> The dead man touch'd me from the past,
> And all at once it seem'd at least
> The living soul was flash'd on mine,
>
> And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
> About empyreal heights of thought,
> And came on that which is, and caught
> The deep pulsations of the world....
> (XCV, stanzas 9-10)

It will be remembered that Teufelsdröckh ultimately felt that he was a part of the world, just as Tennyson did.

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[23]Smith, p. 34.

There are other sections of "In Memoriam" which certainly voice transcendental experiences. As Tennyson can be likened to Carlyle, so can he be compared to Coleridge, in particular, his "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." It would seem that Tennyson's lines

> I do but sing because I must,
> And pipe but as the linnets sing....
> (XXI, stanza 6)

are reminiscent of the duty or mission the mariner felt to tell and retell his story concerning the albatross. And finally, the affirmation

> I curse not Nature, no, nor Death;
> For nothing is that errs from law.
> (LXXXIII, stanza 2)

is very similar to the blessing of the water snakes in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."[24] The assertion also has been advanced that Tennyson was influenced in this respect by Goethe's "Faust."

> The final scene of "Faust," which imperceptibly merges individual effort, natural development, immortality, may well have inspired Tennyson's assertion of the same process.[25]

There probably was some connection between the two since the influence of Goethe was being felt quite extensively in Victorian England. It will be remembered that Carlyle was influenced by Goethe and Kant; Tennyson was also well-read

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[24]Ryals, p. 230.

[25]Lore Metzger, "The Eternal Process: Some Parallels Between Goethe's "Fauste" and Tennyson's 'In Memoriam,'" Victorian Poetry, I (1963), p. 192.

and quite knowledgeable; so certainly the connection could exist.

Generally, the outcome of a transcendental experience is that one formulates a sense of duty. This is true in "The Princess" when Ida feels it her duty to be a full woman, and it is true in "In Memoriam." Tennyson had

> a symbolic dream which invisages "the great progress of the Age, as well as the opening of another world" and all "the great hopes of humanity and science."[26]

Directly after this one reads those famous lines in section CVI which begins:

> Ring out the wild bells, to the wild sky....
> (CVI, stanza 1)

The ringing of the "wild bells" is a praising "of man's progress toward an earthly paradise."[27] A contrast can be made between the earlier bell in section X.

> I hear the noise about thy keel;
> I hear the bell struck in the night....
> (X, stanza 1)

That singular bell voices the solitary grief of Tennyson as he heard the bell of the ship which brought the "loved remains" of Hallam back to England. The latter bells, plural however, voice the universal joy of a new and better world to come.

> Tennyson is not arguing that man's spiritual progress is an automatic movement, but he is assuming the exist-

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[26]Baum, p. 112.

[27]Ryals, p. 247.

> ence of an inherent moral consciousness which aids one in pursuit of moral perfection.... Man's duty was to evolve....[28]

In addition, the transcendental experience and sense of duty are felt in "Maud." Here again, the narrator feels the need to pass from the self to the not self. The hero is completely caught up within himself over his unrequited love for Maud. In his madness, however, he understands that the world requires much more than personal relationships. He says in his affirmation of faith in the world:

> Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims....
>
> (Pt. III, l. 38)

In comparison then, Ida, from an association with frenzies, understands her role as a full woman; Tennyson, from a dream, understands the full progress of civilization: and the hero of "Maud" from madness, understands that he must go to war.

> The same longing to be identified with mankind, to escape isolation by participation in the common lot, even if that lot be death, may also be found in the last line of "Maud."[29]
>
> I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd.
>
> (Pt. III, l. 59)

Emanating from the drive to progress were great scientific advancements. Certainly Tennyson did not hesitate to utilize as themes the scientific discoveries being made.

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[28]James G. Taafe, "The Circle Imagry in Tennyson's 'In Memoriam,'" Victorian Poetry, I (1963), p. 128. Note: The underlining is my own.

[29]Smith, pp. 128-129.

It should be noted that all three of the poems used for discussion were written before the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species which caused such a great and enduring unrest between the clergy and the scientists. However, various earlier works such as Lyell's Geology and Herbert Spencer's Vestiges were known to Tennyson.

> the idea of continuous development of species and of nations, with a corollary that development might be interrupted, was one with which Tennyson was familiar at a very early stage in his career.[30]

Killham goes on to say that Tennyson's interest in science came about because of his interest in man.[31]

It is logical in a poem such as "The Princess" concerning a university that Tennyson's knowledge of science could be used. The curriculum of the university includes the traditional studies, but also includes scientific subjects.

> Then we dipt in all
> That treats of whatsoever is, the state,
> The total chronicles of man, the mind,
> The morals, something of the frame, the rock,
> The star, the bird, the fish, the shell, the flower,
> Electric, chemic laws, and all the rest,
> And whatsoever can be taught and known....
> (Pt. II, ll. 357-363)

There is the mention of telescopes, steamships, and railways. In addition:

> And there thro' twenty posts of telegraph
> They flash'd a saucy message to and fro
> Between the mimic stations; so that sport
> Went hand in hand with science....
> (Prologue, ll. 77-80)

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[30]Killham, p. 241.

[31]Ibid.

Ida is interested in astronomy and mathematics, and she and Psyche stay up one night to discuss these subjects. There also is an account of a geological expedition.

> Hammering and clinking, chattering stony
> names
> Of shale and hornblende, rag and trap and
> tuff
> Amygdaloid and trachyte....
> (Pt. III, ll. 342-344)

It is interesting to note that Tennyson was very specific in his reference to science. It seems then that he was more than a casual observer of the field.[32]

In "In Memoriam," however, Tennyson did not seem so interested in the exact sciences of astronomy and geology, perhaps because he was more interested in evolution. The publication of "In Memoriam" was in 1850, the same year that Herbert Spencer's Vestiges was published. Victorian England did not wait to become incensed by Darwin, but the anonymously published Vestiges had shaken the core of Victorian orthodoxy. The poem has been summarized as

> fundamentally an effort to save religion from science by adducing a Coleridgeon philosophy of religious experience against the demonstration of God from nature, or by reconciling the nineteenth century belief in the

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[32]Tennyson's interest in science was quite pronounced when he was a student at Cambridge and continued throughout his life. In 1828, Tennyson advanced the theory that the "development of the human brain might possibly be traced from the radiated vermicular, molluscous and vertebrate organisms." The poet was ridiculed by the professor because he was, in effect, likening the human brain to that of the worm and the worm has no brain. Tennyson, however, was undaunted and continued his interest in science. (Memoir, p. 44)

> progress of the species with the Christian concept of salvation.[33]

Science then to many pious mid-century Victorians was "the direct enemy of God, the anti-Christ of the time...."[34] Tennyson was typically mid-century Victorian in many respects, but he certainly did not fear science.

> "In Memoriam" represents an important stage in his life-long struggle to build some basis for a belief which, while rejecting no scientific discovery, however disconcerting, might be able "to satisfy the needs and justify the existence of man."[35]

In an effort to understand the relationship between science and religion, Tennyson borrowed from both camps in his poem. It is evident that Tennyson believed in Lyell's theory that the world was created by a never ending process of erosion and igneous activity.[36] Tennyson wrote:

> There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
> O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
> There where the long street roars hath been
> The stillness of the central sea.
> (CXXIII, stanza 1)

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[33]Carlisle Moore, "Faith, Doubt, and Mystical Experience in 'In Memoriam,'" Victorian Studies, VII (1963), p. 157.

[34]Fausset, pp. 154-155.

[35]Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (New York; 1949), p. 250.

[36]Killham, p. 247.

Tennyson also voices his belief in evolution when he says:

> So then were nothing lost to man;
> So that still garden of the souls
> In many a figured leaf enrolls
> The total world since life began....
> (XLIII, stanza 3)

As a panacea for this schism between religion and science, Tennyson offered one word, "faith."

> Spiritual evolution begins where physical ends; the creative harmony of mind transcends the creative harmony of force. Man is then the culmination of the beast.[37]

Tennyson felt that we have freedom of will.

> Our wills are ours, we know not how;
> Our wills are ours, to make them thine.
> (Intro., stanza 4)

It should be noted that man does have the choice to submit this will to God, but then after his will is submitted to God, Man does not have the ability completely to know. Thus, faith must take over.[38]

Hence, Tennyson voiced a typically Victorian prayer, not only for himself, but for the whole race of men:

> Let knowledge grow from more to more;
> But more of reverence in us dwell
> That mind and soul, according well,
> May make one music as before,
>
> But vaster.
> (Intro., stanzas 7-8)

The evolution idea prevalent in the other two poems is also present in "Maud," but to somewhat lesser degree. Per-

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[37]Fausset, p. 150.

[38]Elisa Hershey Sneath, The Mind of Tennyson (London, 1901), pp. 82-83.

haps the poet had spent his effort of reconciling religion and science. In "In Memoriam," however, there is a mention of evolution.

> As nine months go to the shaping an infant
> ripe for his birth,
> So many a million of ages have gone to the
> making of man:
> He now is first, but is he the last? is he
> not too base?
>
> (Pt. I, ll. 135-137)

As one critic interprets this line:

> Evolution may not make a man proud of the past, but it gives him a most wonderful hope for future and counsels patience with the present.[39]

Probably the most pragmatic product of nineteenth century progress was that of commercialization and those social wrongs growing out of Carlyle's plea to "Produce! Produce!" In this area also, Tennyson held some fairly strong views. He was trying to explain social conditions in an impartial, intelligent way. Thus, people should not view him as being stupid or hypocritical. "The Princess" was, in fact, Tennyson's attempt to give artistic expression to some of the beliefs and ideals of his age.[40] It should be noted in the Prologue to "The Princess" that there was a Mechanic's Institute which seemed to operate much like Apostles did, the club to which Tennyson belonged at Cambridge.

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[39]Williams Gordon, The Social Ideals of Alfred Tennyson (Chicago, 1906), pp. 203-204.

[40]Killham, pp. 277-278.

This suggests the new middle-class, the class which was becoming wealthy from industrialization, was usurping the place of the old aristocracy. It should be noted, in addition, that Cyril, one of the Prince's companions, was a man who enjoyed a good time, but Tennyson hastens to add:

> The first, a gentleman of broken means--
> His father's fault....
> (Pt. I, 11. 52-53)

It is not that Tennyson is being snobbish about Cyril's depleted funds, but in the nineteenth century these problems were important to the people.

Even "The Way of the Soul" does not escape the discussion of society. In his great section of triumph, Tennyson voices many of his social beliefs--how he would rescue the <u>world</u> from its social wrongs.

> Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
> Ring in redress to all mankind
>
> And ancient forms of party strife;
> Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
>
> Ring out false pride in place and blood,
> The civic slander and the spite;
>
> Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
> Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
> Ring out the thousand wars of old,
> Ring in the thousand years of peace.
> (CVI)

As forceful as the above may sound, the third poem, "Maud," seems to be Tennyson's actual vendetta against commercialization.

> "Maud" itself with its Carlylean denunciation of commercial corruption, is concerned with something a good deal more significant to Tennyson than the love affair of an unbalanced young man. The hero's despair is caused, in part, by a malaise in the social order....[41]

Like Cyril in "The Princess," the hero of "Maud" is a victim of his father's loss of friends:

> But that old man, now lord of the broad
> estate and the Hall,
> Dropt off gorged from a scheme that had
> left us flaccid and drain'd.
> (Pt. I, 11. 38-40)

The hero also shows contempt for the manner in which the wealthy abuse the poor.

> And the Vitriol madness flushes up in the
> ruffian's head,
> Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of
> the trampled wife,
> And chalk and alum and plaster are sold to
> the poor for bread,
> And the spirit of murder works in the very
> means of life.
> (Pt. I, 11. 37-40)

Hence, after the hero experiences lost love, madness, and recovery, he decides to right some of those wrongs on which he languished so much time.

HYPOCRISY

As was established in Chapter One, the Victorians are most often criticized for their insincerity or their hypocrisy by citizens of the ostensibly honest and forthright twentieth century. It would seem then that the Poet Laureate, the

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[41]Pitt, p. 154.

spokesman of the period, might also radically come under the same criticism. This is basically true; however, at times this criticism has been falsely placed.

One fact that many twentieth century readers fail to grasp or accept is that Tennyson might have expressed hypocrisy not merely to be hypocritical himself, but rather as a poetic device; that is, to emphasize a certain point. This, it seems, could be true concerning higher education for women in "The Princess." Throughout a good deal of the poem, Tennyson seems to be very much in favor of Princess Ida's university, but, of course, the reversal of Ida takes place, and the theme changes from education to courtship and marriage. It might be argued that Tennyson "tricked" the audience by reversing himself in mid-stream. This, however, is wrong. Rather, poetically, Tennyson had to progress in this manner to show the conversion of Ida. "The Princess" is not a poem of education, but one of courtship and marriage.

> It is foolish to laugh at Tennyson's concern with domestic relationships--they were at the forefront of the Victorian ethical tableau, they are the basis of a literary convention, as most poets use the conventions of their period, as the medium of something else.[42]

Concerning education for women, certainly there was unrest and revolution concerning education in general, and Victorians were thinking about women in relation to education. In 1837 W. Anderson Smith said this concerning the place of Victorian women in the world:

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[42]Ibid., pp. 136-137.

> Women are veiled in the East. She is crippled in China, concealed and imprisoned in Persia and Turkey, and regarded as chattel or private property in other countries. In Europe her veil is partially lifted because this is where secrets of nature and science are discovered.[43]

Critics also have lamented that Tennyson used comedy in "The Princess." They say that the use of comedy makes Tennyson sound insincere about his subject. The comical touches should not, however, mar the fact that Tennyson was very sincere in writing "a social tract."[44] After all, one could argue, does the humorous drunken scene in "Macbeth" reduce the effectiveness of the great tragedy? Thus, one can advance the point that Tennyson was certainly sincere in his poem. Perhaps Tennyson did include the fairy tale idea to attract his women readers, because Tennyson wanted not only to make his point to men but also to women.[45]

In "In Memoriam," Tennyson was aware that the public might take exception to his grief over the loss of Hallam.

> Another answers: 'Let him be,
> He loves to make parade of pain,
> That with his piping he may gain
> That praise that comes to constancy....
> (XXI, stanza 3)

Tennyson, however, fields this criticism in defending himself.

> Behold, ye speak an idle thing,
> Ye never knew the sacred dust.
> I do but sing because I must,
> And pipe but as the linnets sing....
> (XXI, stanza 6)

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[43] Ibid., pp. 136-137.

[44] Smith, p. 41.

[45] Killham, p. 268.

Tennyson, then, was not merely trying to gain the favor of Victoria in an attempt to gain the Laureateship.

> For Tennyson...was sensitive to the spiritual temper of his time; by power of will and imagination, he became the true interpreter of Victorian conflict.[46]

It is true that the year 1850 changed Tennyson's life, but it is submitted that the writing of "In Memoriam" was an expression of "his grief...recollected in tranquility." "In Memoriam" was a poem of Tennyson's grief, mid-century Victorian grief, and the grief "of the whole human race."[47]

> Marriage, "In Memoriam," and the Laureateship had broken down his last defenses against the stream of life. The days of musing and brooding were over. The recluse of Somersby had become a National Institution.[48]

It seemed upsetting to many Victorians who were so enthralled with "In Memoriam" that the great spokesman for the Age would write a poem like "Maud." Tennyson, however, liked "Maud" very much, had high hopes for it, and enjoyed reading the poem aloud. Those who attacked "Maud" did so primarily because they felt it was too topical, and it seemed to them that Tennyson was trying too hard to please his new employer, Queen Victoria.

One must defend the poet though. He did point up what he felt to be hypocritical in his age. It must be re-

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[46]Buckley, The Growth of a Poet, p. 84.

[47]Ralph Wilson Rader, Tennyson's "Maud": The Biographical Genesis (Berkley, 1963), p. 120.

[48]Charles Tennyson, p. 256.

membered that Tennyson was not a church-goer until later in his life. He had two religious beliefs: which were the belief in God and the immortality of man.[49] In "Maud" the hero in a crazed state seems to strike out at the organized religion of the day.

> Wretchedest age, since Time began,
> They cannot even bury a man;
> And tho' we paid our tithes in the days
> that are gone,
> Not a bell was rung, not a prayer was read.
> It is that which makes us loud in the
> world of the dead;
> There is none that does his work, not one.
> A touch of their office might have sufficed,
> But the churchmen fain would kill their
> church,
> As the churches have kill'd their Christ.
> (Pt. II, ll. 259-267)

It should be noted that the hero is crazed when he says this, and so is he mad when he is so viciously passionate about Maud. It could be said that the hero can be excused for such talk because he is mad, but it could also be advanced that these are the true feelings of Tennyson, and that he puts them into the mouth of a mad man so that the audience will not condemn the poet.

Some Victorians, the "doves" of the Crimean War, criticized Tennyson as being a "hawk." They felt that Tennyson included the Crimean War specifically because he was the poet Laureate and that he was trying to please the government.[50] This is perhaps a valid criticism. It seems as if Tennyson

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[49]Baum, p. 254.

[50]Charles Tennyson, p. 287.

merely "threw in" the Crimean War as a happy instance. The poem might have been more effective if he, the hero, had sensed a mission more universal in scope. It also seems that Tennyson, in favoring the Crimean War, negates or disagrees with previous statements he made concerning wars. In "In Memoriam" he cried:

> Ring out the thousand wars of old,
> Ring in the thousand years of peace.
> (CVI, stanza 7)

Earlier in "Locksley Hall" the poet prophesied:

> Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and
> the battle flags were furl'd
> In the Parliament of man, the Federation
> of the world.
>
> There the common sense of most shall hold
> a fretful realm in awe,
> And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in
> universal law.
> (11. 127-130)

Thus, there is a reversal of opinion and one might feel that Tennyson had sanctioned one thing and acted in another way in "Maud."

Thus, Tennyson was a personification of mid-century Victorianism. In comparison, the Age was hardly a period of security and relaxation, and this certainly influenced Tennyson, the Poet Laureate of the Victorian Age.

> Walt Whitman, who liked Tennyson, discerned that "his very doubts, swervings, doublings upon himself, have been typical of our age." The price that Tennyson pays for being a "representative" poet is great. He suffers our disease and our confusion. He triumphs not as a master but as a victim. It is a vicarious

> role, and upon him we heap our detested sins.... After him the deluge, spreading chaos of "modern art." He is one of its makers.[51]

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[51]Austin Wright, Victorian Literature (New York, 1961), pp. 331-332.

CHAPTER III

Robert Browning

Alfred Tennyson, the Poet Laureate was the spokesman for the Victorian Age, but, of course, he was not the only poet of any importance. Also of great importance was Robert Browning, whose life was very different from that of Tennyson's. Each man, however, must not diminish the other. Each had a message for his Age just as the Age had given him a message.

> Both drew mankind. Tennyson is closer to that which is most universally in the human heart, Browning to the vast variety within it; and men in the future will find their poetic wants best satisfied by reading the work of both these poets.... Each has done a different part of that portraiture of human nature which is the chief work of a poet.[1]

Earlier it was said that Tennyson was "a poet of the classical Renaissance" since he displayed such effective human insight.[2] Likewise, Browning could be associated with the Renaissance because of his zest for life and his curiosity regarding man. His creative genius has many facets and in richness and versatility is unsurpassed in nineteenth-century English Literature.[3]

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[1]Stopford A. Brooke, The Poetry of Robert Browning (New York, 1902), p. 46.

[2]Oliver Elton, Tennyson (Liverpool, 1901), p. 21.

[3]Austin Wright, Victorian Poetry (New York, 1961), p. 101.

Browning has also been recognized as being a great influence on such poets as Ezra Pound.[4] Thus Browning's influence was felt in his time and is continuing to be felt in the twentieth century. Witnesses to Browning's continuing popularity and influence are the Browning Societies which were established in the 1880's in England by Dr. Furnivall to discuss the poetry of Browning. These groups have spread throughout the world and are still in operation in many parts of America and England.

The study of the mid-century Victorianism of Robert Browning's poetry will be conducted by means of the pre-established characteristics of Victorianism; duality, progress, and hypocrisy. The poems which will be used are selections from Browning's three major works published between 1845 and 1855; Bells and Pomegranates, "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day," and Men and Women.

DUALITY

It is essential in any type of literature that some sort of conflict be present to facilitate the plot, theme, and characterization. In the dedication of "Sordello," Browning made this statement concerning his theory of writing. He said that "stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study."[5] In some of the works to

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[4]Boyd Litzinger, Times Revenges (Knoxville, 1964), p. 28.

[5]Robert Browning, The Works of Robert Browning, Centenary Edition, Vol. I (New York, 1966), p. 178.

consider, "the development of a soul" is quite evident, as with Tennyson, the growth of one or many individuals will be examined.

The first work to consider in the area of duality is Browning's 1845 volume, Bells and Pomegranates. The title may seem a little strange, but the name was used to express "something like an alternation, or mixture of music with discoursing, sound with sense, poetry with thought."[6] Thus, the title displays comparisons and contrasts--the "twoness" which was discussed earlier.

One poem in this volume seems a little odd for Browning to have written. Usually one associates the poems of Browning with either Renaissance or Medieval figures, but, nonetheless, historical people. This is not the case in the small poem, "Nationality in Drinks," which was originally entitled, "Claret and Tokay." This poem shocked Browning's contemporaries because of its commonplace material. Browning however, enjoyed the commonplace,

> for it brought unexpected material into his poetry, and along with it, to deal with it, a vast new vocabulary in which the conventional poetic vocabulary of the time was swamped and drowned.[7]

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[6]W. Hall Griffin and Harry Christopher Minchin, The Life of Robert Browning (Handin; 1966), p. 123.

[7]Edwin Muir, Essays on Literature and Society (Cambridge; 1965), pp. 107-8.

There are three drinks discussed in the poem; Claret, Tokay or Port, and beer. Browning certainly was aware that there were strict but unwritten drinking rules at the time. The Tories drank Claret, the Liberals drank Port, and the middle-class man drank beer. In 1845, the Tories were in office; so this could be the reason that Browning discusses Claret first. In the last section, a short tribute to Admiral Nelson is made, and he is associated not with the political drinks but with beer. Browning, through such association is enobling the beer, that which is not involved in politics. Nelson, in the "beer section," "still with tar on the shoulder" is pictured as a hard working man, but Claret is associated with "some gay French lady," and Tokay is associated with "a pygmy castle-warder." This would suggest that Browning was ridiculing the politicians for not really accomplishing anything except frivolity. On the other hand though, Nelson, the non-politician, has tar on his shoulder which would suggest hard work on his part. Thus, in this satire Browning displays the duality in the politics of the day--the Tories and the Liberals and the duality between the citizens and the politicians. The citizens win out and the politicians are the victims of humorous ridicule.

Another poem which was originally included in the 1845 edition seems more typical of Browning's work, "The Bishop Orders His Tomb At Saint Praxed's Church." Since this poem concerns Rome, 15--, it seems that Browning was

most interested in the time span. When Browning in 1845, sent this poem to F. A. Ward, the editor of Hood's Magazine, Browning wrote, "...I pick it out as being a pet of mine, and just the thing for the time--what with the Oxford business." Browning was referring to the Tractarian Movement which was in full bloom at the time. Browning's letter to Ward was written on February 18, 1845, and John Henry Newman was received into the Roman Catholic Church on October 9, 1845.[8]

It will be remembered that Newman's duty, he felt, was to attempt to reform the Church of England from within. That is, he disagreed with the Anglican stand that the duty of the Church was to make men gentlemen, not saints as Newman proposed. Newman said:

> How mistaken is the notion of the day, that the main undertaking of a Christian Church is to make men good members of society.... If the Church set out by engaging to make men good members of the state, they would be very much in place; but if the great object of her Sacraments, preaching, Scriptures, and instructions, is to save the elect of God, to foster into life and rear up into perfection what is really good, not what is useful merely, but what is true and holy; and if to influence those who act on secondary motives require a lowering of the Christian standard, and if an exhibition of the truth makes a man worse unless it makes him better, then she has fulfilled her calling....[9]

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[8]William Clyde DeVane and Kenneth Leslie Knickerbocker, New Letters of Robert Browning (New Haven; 1950), pp. 35-36.

[9]John Henry Newman, Charles F. Harold (ed.), A Newman Treasury (London; 1943), pp. 251-2.

Thus, Newman draws a sharp distinction between the temporal man and the spiritual man, viewing the spiritual man as the responsibility of the Church.

"The Bishop Orders His Tomb," even though it is set in Rome, 15--, is by the admission of Browning himself, a comment on the Tractarian Movement. Newman's major criticism was that the Church of England placed too much emphasis on the temporal life as opposed to the spiritual. Certainly this criticism is applicable to the Bishop also. It would be assumed that a church man would be thinking of God at his time of death. This Bishop, however, is most vitally interested in having a better tomb than his long-standing rival, Gandolf. Newman said this concerning death:

> Unless our faith be very active, so as to pierce beyond the grave, and realize the future, we feel depressed to what seems like a failure of great things.... The hour of death seems to be a season, of which...much might be done for the glory of God....[10]

It is fairly certain that the Bishop's faith was not "active enough to pierce beyond the grave," and the Bishop cared little, if at all, if it did or not. The hour of the Bishop's death also did nothing "for the glory of God." Rather, the Bishop was more interested in his own glory than God's.

This, then, is Browning's comment on the Tractarian Movement. The dying Bishop perhaps represents the ineffectual Church of England as Newman and Browning saw it. It is ironic that Browning reversed the roles of the Catholic and the Church

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[10]Ibid., p. 146.

of England, but the satiric reversal seems logical and effective.

The character of the Bishop would also seem to represent the character of the Victorian Age itself. The fading bishop tends to view himself hazily. Certainly, he is not positive of his state. He asks,

"Do I live, am I dead?" (l. 13)[11]

He also envisions himself as Christ:

I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook.... (l. 87)

This suggests the pictures usually associated with Christ as being a shepherd in search of the lost sheep. The irony of this is that the Bishop, in envisioning himself as the Good Shepherd, is himself the lost sheep. The mid-century Victorian Age with its paradoxes, its dualities, its inability to see itself clearly could be associated with the Bishop, the holy man who did not practice holiness.

Browning's two poems of 1850, "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day," voice the dualistic nature first by their titles as did the earlier Bells and Pomegranates. Christmas is associated with the birth of Christ. Easter, on the other hand, is associated with the death of Christ, but Easter represents a rebirth. Viewed together, the two poems create a

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[11]This quotation and all subsequent quotations from the poems will be taken from The Works of Robert Browning, the Centenary Edition with line numbers included.

circle, the circle of life; birth to death to life.

The two poems were termed a commercial failure as there were only two-hundred copies sold, and many critics have felt that they were intellectual failures also.[12] This point is disputable certainly. Obviously, one cannot argue that two-hundred copies show great commercial success, but the intellectual success is disputable. DeVane says that the poems were "not significant" for the times and "even less so for ours."[13] It could be argued, however, that Browning, by the end of the poem, had arrived at some valid conclusion which furthered him spiritually. It will be remembered that Tennyson, by the end of his 1850 poem, "In Memoriam," arrived at the solution to his doubt, which came through faith and love. This, the Victorian audience applauded as a great poem. Browning, on the other hand, is able to affirm in the concluding lines of "Christmas-Eve:"

> I choose here!
> (l. 1341)

Thus, a parallel may be drawn between Tennyson's and Browning's 1850 works. Tennyson's poem achieved both commercial and spiritual success, but Browning's work, even though it did not achieve commercial success, was a spiritual success. Browning was able to make a definite affirmation of faith,

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[12] William Clyde DeVane, "The Harlot and the Thoughtful Man," The Browning Critics by Boyd Litzinger and K. L. Knickerbocker (Lexington, 1965), p. 187.

[13] Ibid.

not that he would attend the Zion Chapel regularly, but that he, at least in part, sided with the Dissenters. It was important for the Victorians to have some sort of faith on which to cling, and both Tennyson and Browning voiced this importance.

"Christmas-Eve" exhibits the fact that certainly there was not one religion autonomous in England in the 1850's. The three religions or philosophies discussed in "Christmas-Eve" are the Dissenters, the Roman Catholics, and the rationalists. One must remember though that these three were not separate unto themselves. Rather, within the Church of England there were Dissenters, those who espoused rationalism and previously many of whom had converted to Catholicism with Newman. Hence, the three doctrines discussed in "Christmas-Eve" could be called the outstanding factions of thought within the Church of England at that time. To facilitate his discussion of these three ideas, the narrator journeys to London for the Dissenter's view, to Rome for the Catholic's, and to Gottingen for the rationalist's view.

Browning had the narrator journey to Gottingen, Germany for the rationalist point of view because mid-century Victorian England was very interested at that time in the writing of David Strauss since Charles Hennell had published, in 1838, An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity and George Eliot had translated Das Leben Jesu by Strauss in 1846.

The central idea of Strauss was that he

> identified the unhistorical elements in the Gospel accounts of Jesus as the product of the mythical consciousness of the race. He did not assail the Christ idea but viewed it as a "sacred legend."[14]

. . . . . .

> For Strauss, He /Christ/ is a symbol of the union of the divine and the human, God and man--a union which has total reality not a single man, a messiah, but in the race.[15]

In addition to the religious factions dramatized in "Christmas-Day," there is the duality between the elements of realism and those of imagination.[16] An example of this also "Dickens-type" reality is seen in the Zion Chapel with the congregation.

> The man with the handkerchief untied it,
> Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
> Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
> And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
> The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
> Kept down his cough.
> (11. 177-182)

In contrast, imagination is used effectively when the narrator has a vision of Christ.

> All at once I looked up with terror.
> He was there.
> He himself with his human air.
> On the narrow pathway, just before.
> (11. 430-433)

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[14]Bernard J. Paris, Experiments in Life (Detroit, 1965), p. 91.

[15]Ibid., p. 92.

[16]Phyllis J. Guskin, "Ambiguities in the Structure and Meaning of Browning's 'Christmas-Eve,'" Victorian Poetry, IV (1966), p. 27.

It should be noted that when the poet discusses secular objects he uses realism. But, when the poet discusses concepts, he uses imagination.

The companion poem, "Easter-Day," is almost equally divided into two sections. In parts one through fourteen there is a colloquy. Browning takes the reader into his confidence and writes about "you" and "me." In parts fifteen through thirty-two the poet discusses his vision of the Day of Judgment. In addition,

> The pleasures of Earth are compared to the joys of Heaven; the labors of the body and the mind, with the duties of the spirit, until the poet has finally resolved upon a way of life that promises immediate and eternal salvation.[17]

It is possible to take exception with Guskin, however, in that the poet does not seem to be entirely "resolved upon a way of life that promises immediate and eternal salvation." As in "Christmas-Eve," there is duality in the narrator's resolution. By the end of "Easter-Day" the narrator still finds Christianity hard, but at times it does seem easier. He says:

> and I find it hard
> To be a Christian, as I said!
> Still every now and then my head
> Raised glad, sinks mournful--all grows drear
> Spite of the sunshine....
> (ll. 1030-1034)

There is then duality within the poems themselves, and also in the conclusions reached.

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[17] Ibid., p. 168.

Just as Tennyson went from his 1850 work of religious statement to a more secular statement in 1855, so Browning went from religion and philosophy of 1850 to Men and Women in 1855. Browning was fond of contrasts in general, but contrasts in titles seemed to fascinate him too. As in the previous two works, there is the duality of Men and Women. Also, the monologues themselves are dual in nature. Indeed they are "studies of personalities," but they also

> speak with point for Browning on contemporary issues. Not to consider their words in this light is to deny him a dimension which all the great Victorians possess.[18]

The first poem of this volume to consider is "Fra Lippo Lippi." Roma A. King has compiled a list of contrasts present in the poem which is helpful in understanding its duality.

1. jocularity to seriousness
2. sportive ladies to saintly beauty
3. artistic integrity to compromise
4. moral indignation to complacency
5. defiance to deference
6. pathos to humor
7. emotional effusion to calm logical argument
8. spring nights and carnival time to the new and its saints
9. light ribald songs to "St. Jerome knocking at his poor old breast" "to subdue the flesh"[19]

Some of these conflicts should be viewed more closely.

First, Fra Lippo Lippi is certainly dual within himself. Lippi is obviously not the pious, stereotypical monk who

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[18]William Irvine, "Four Monologues in Browning's Men and Women," Victorian Poetry, II (1964), p. 156.

[19]King, p. 21.

entirely cloisters himself. Rather, he goes out into the world and makes the most of life. Lippi's language has duality to fit his various situations. That is, "his street diction is earthy and sensuous; his monastery diction is abstract and intellectual."[20] For purposes of contrast, an example of street diction:

> Then, you'll take
> Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
> And please to know me likewise.
> (ll. 12-14)

And then, Lippi's monastery diction:

> I shall paint
> God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
> Ringed by a bowery flowery angel-brood,
> Lilies and vestments and white faces....
> (ll. 347-350)

Notice the difference between "fiddling" in the first quote and "bowery" and "flowery" in the second. In addition, it is interesting that "Fra Lippo passes from his intercourse with 'the girls' to his Socratic intercourse with the officers on the sacramental status of man's creatural realism...."[21]

There is also the conflict between the Prior and Lippi concerning their theories of art, especially in association with realism. The Prior wishes that Lippi would paint the ideal. That is, the Prior wants him to paint the way he

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[20] Ibid., p. 44.

[21] W. David Shaw, "Character and Philosophy in 'Fra Lippo Lippi,'" Victorian Poetry, II (1964), p. 130.

wishes life were. The artist wishes to paint life as it is.[22] Lippi argues with the Prior:

> This world's no blot for us,
> Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
> To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
> (ll. 313-315)

And finally, the painting on which Lippi is currently working is that of St. Jerome who is

> knocking at his poor old breast
> With his great round stone to subdue the flesh....
> (ll. 73-74)

Browning probably included this painting to point up the comparison between the pious Jerome and the not so pious Lippi. Jerome knocks at his breast to subdue the flesh. That is, Jerome inflicts pain upon himself so that he will not succumb to his carnal instincts. Ironically, Lippi who is painting his picture, would not subdue the flesh, but rather eagerly succumbs to physical pleasures.

The final poem to discuss in Men and Women is "Cleon," a very different poem from "Fra Lippo Lippi" in time, place, and character. As King formulated nine conflicts in "Fra Lippo Lippi" so did he formulate a similar list for "Cleon." He says that Cleon is torn between:

1. sensitiveness to beauty and awareness of its fragility
2. joy in the physical life and his increasing debility
3. respect for the mind and the discovery of its limitations

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[22]William Whitla, The Central Truth (Toronto, 1963), p. 61.

4. a desire to externalize time and the sense of its transience
5. instinctive longings for a revealed religion and an inability to accept one.[23]

Thus Cleon feels that he has formulated all the answers to life and has even

> written three books on the soul,
> Proving absurd all written hitherto....
> (11. 57-58)

It is interesting that Cleon feels that he has proven facts concerning the soul. How is it possible for one to prove facts about something as intangible as the soul. Cleon, however, states that he has, but by the end of the poem he says:

> It is horrible,
> I dare at times imagine to my need
> Some future state....
> (11. 323-325)

Thus, all this "knowledge" of the soul is not enough for Cleon, and he feels some sort of need for faith rather than knowledge since at the end he discusses Paulus and Christus, or, in other words, Christianity. There is then a dichotomy between the Greek humanism of Cleon and Christianity.[24] That is, Cleon is, as is stated in "Stanza From The Grande Chartreuse" by Matthew Arnold, "wandering between two worlds, one dead/ The other powerless to be born." (11. 85-86)

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[23]Roma A. King, Jr., "Browning: 'Mage' and 'Maker'--A Study in Poetic Purpose and Method," Robert Browning by Phillip Drewe, (ed.) (London, 1966), p. 191.

[24]Ibid., p. 190.

Thus, Browning was affected by much of "twoness" of the Age: skepticism, traditional beliefs, the secular, the religious, the reality, the ideal. Even though Browning placed this duality in other countries and other times, his poems still reflect the mid-century Victorian Age. Browning changed the setting, one might imagine, to make his thoughts clearer to his readers. The readers might have been more inclined to accept the theories espoused by Browning if the readers were not told directly that these were <u>their</u> faults. Nonetheless, Browning, even though he spent a great deal of time outside England, knew about and understood the paradoxes and duality present in his age in Victorian England, but more important, he used such materials to shape his art.

PROGRESS

> If we take this world and are satisfied with it, cease to aspire, beyond our limits, to full perfection in God; if our soul should ever say, "I want no more; what I have here--the pleasure, fame, knowledge, beauty, or love of this world--is all I need or care for," then we are indeed lost. That is the last damnation.[25]

Browning would have agreed with the above statement concerning progress. Browning felt that self-satisfaction "is the last damnation" because when one ceases to aspire he is lost. Browning's progress, however, is not really the materialistic progress associated with Carlyle's "Produce!" "Produce!"

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[25]Berdoe, p. 117.

Rather, Browning's progress encompassed spiritual and intellectual progress. This sort of progress will be discussed in the light of a selection of Browning's poems.

"The Bishop Orders His Tomb At Saint Praxed's Church" could be viewed from two areas of progress; the progress of the Bishop's soul and a by-product of Victorian progress, materialism.

One reason that Browning saw the Bishop in an unfavorable light concerns the Bishop's soul. Certainly, the soul of the Bishop has ceased to grow, that is, if it ever began to grow at all. Those things that the Bishop cares for; "pleasure, fame, knowledge, beauty, or love of this world," are certainly earthbound. In fact, the Bishop has very little time for God or even thinks much about him. As the Bishop begins his instruction to his sons concerning the tomb he desires, one might think he is beginning a sermon concerning God, but this is only a disillusionment. The Bishop says:

> Nephews--sons mine....ah God, I know not!
> Well--
> She, men would have to be your mother....
> (11. 3-4)

In the above quotation, "ah God" is used as an expletive, but there is also a double use of "God" here. There is the use as the expletive, but the Bishop follows "ah God" with "I know not!" This is ironic in that the Bishop, in fact, does not know God. By his own admission, the Bishop does not know God and cares little for making the acquaint-

ance. The Bishop also dismisses the angels with the same indifference:

> And up into the aery dome where live
> The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
> (11. 23-24)

Thus, the angels are equated with a mere sunbeam and God is passed over with a "I know not!" There certainly is no growth of the Bishop's soul, and this is one thing that Browning intensely dislikes.

Another phase of progress in which the Bishop certainly fails at is his intense materialism. Since the Bishop cares nothing for the spiritual realm, he is vitally interested in amassing great wealth on this earth where his soul is bound.

> Perhaps the central irony of the poem is that, at a time when traditionally the Christian should be confessing his sins and preparing his soul for the next world, the Bishop is spending all his energies on securing a gorgeous tomb by which to be remembered in this world.[26]

The Bishop is very interested in a particular type of marble, that which is most rare.

> Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
> As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
> (11. 28-29)

Browning is probably making a comment on the intense materialism, and perhaps even a comment on the taste of the

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[26]Lawrence Perrine, "Browning's 'The Bishop Orders His Tomb At Saint Praxed's Church,'" Explicator, XXIV (1965) Item 12.

Victorians. The Victorians were very fond of many embellishments and likewise was the Bishop. He is interested in

> The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
> Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
> Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
> The Savior at his sermon on the mount,
> Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
> Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
> And Moses with the tables....
> (11. 56-62)

All these vivid descriptions evidence that the Bishop is greatly interested in amassing great wealth on earth; Browning deplores this in mankind.

In Browning's poems of 1850, progress is a great factor, but not the by-product of progress, materialism, as seen in "The Bishop Orders His Tomb." Browning is more interested in 1850 in the progress of a man's soul much as Tennyson was in "In Memoriam." It is almost ironic that in 1850 two of the major poets would be so interested in the soul when at the same time the Crystal Palace displayed such great materialistic progress. This could be a coincidence, but the poetry could also reflect rebellion against this materialism.

Transcendental conversions, as was established earlier, were a common characteristic in Victorian literature. In this respect then, "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day" are typical. It will be remembered that in "Christmas-Eve" the narrator leaves the Zion Chapel, because he cannot accept what is happening there. He goes outdoors and some way away from the chapel in both an attempt to get away from the people and to

try to understand God. Suddenly a rainbow appears:

> This sight was shown me, there and then,--
> Me, one out of a world of men,
> Singled forth, as the chance might hap
> To another if, in a thunderclap
> Where I heard noise and you saw flame,
> Some one man knew God called his name.
> (ll. 404-410)

Thus, the narrator is transported from an area of rejection, The Zion Chapel, to try to understand the truth of life. In the above quotation, "flame" should be noted. The use of the flame in a transcendental experience was not new since Carlyle espoused the "Baphometic Baptism" or baptism by fire.

A similar experience occurs in "Easter-Day" as the narrator is discussing the pleasures of earth. He recalls:

> I found
> Suddenly all the midnight round
> One fire.
> (ll. 503-505)

When the initial flame was sighted by the narrator, he was abashed. He feels that there is nothing he is able to do to rectify his past mistakes on this Judgment Day. He says he hears a voice say:

> "Life is done,
> "Time ends, Eternity begun,
> "And thou art judged for evermore."
> (ll. 594-596)

Out of the smoke, however:

> He stood there. Like the smoke
> Pillard o'er Sodom, when day broke,--
> I saw him.
> (ll. 640-642)

Certainly this is not a full conversion like that transcendental experience in "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" when the mar-

iner blessed the water snakes, and the albatross fell from his neck, but it is a type of transcendental experience.

Hence, after the transcendental experience the narrators are spiritually changed men. In "Christmas-Eve," after the narrator surveys Rome and Göttingen, the Catholics and the rationalists, he is able to return to the Zion Chapel and affirm:

> I choose here!
> The giving out of the hymn reclaims me....[27]
> (11. 1341-1342)

And finally in "Easter-Day" the narrator, although not fully converted, is able to affirm:

> Thank God, she still each method tries
> To catch me, who may yet escape
> She knows....
> (11. 1026-1028)

And:

> Thank God, no paradise stands barred
> To entry....
> (11. 1029-1030)

In both poems, it is the duty of the poet to learn (1) the best way to worship and (2) what it is to be a Christian. These poems are then "a sort of individual pilgrim's progress in the mind, with the ultimate goal of moral

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[27]Robert Browning's mother who died on March 26, 1849, was a Calvinist. Browning, who toyed with the Unitarian Church and had read Strauss seemed to return to the Calvinist's or the Dissenter's Chapel. Elizabeth Barrett Browning said of Robert's religion, "Her God is his God, Her savior his savior." Mrs. Browning was referring to Browning's mother. (Betty Miller, Robert Browning: A Portrait (New York, 1953), p. 174.)

and personal commitment...."[28] Thus, typical of Victorian progress, one must learn the answers privately and then go out in the world to render his service in the progress of the human race. Thus, the narrator says in "Christmas-Eve."

> I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
> And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,
> Who head and heart alike discernest,
> Looking below light speech we utter,
> When frothy spume and frequent sputter
> Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest!
> May truth shine out, stand ever before us!
> (11. 1348-1354)

The poet, in an attempt to understand life, first turns to Nature. In "Christmas-Eve," Nature, in part, facilitates an aid in giving an answer for the poet. It is important to remember that the vision does not reveal itself to the poet in the chapel, but rather in "freer atmosphere of Nature."[29] The poet, however, must investigate the religion before his questions are answered. Nature cannot answer them for him, but rather help in his mission. Likewise, in "Easter-Day" the poet searches for answers in Nature. He decides, however:

> Though sharp dispairs
> Shot through me, I held up, bore on.
> "What matter though my trust were gone
> "From natural things?
> (11. 773-776)

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[28]Guskin, p. 23.

[29]Ethel M. Naish, Browning and Dogma (London, 1906), p. 105.

Throughout literary history, many poets have shunned science and Browning is no exception. In "Easter-Day" Browning says that the answer for him is certainly not in science.

> "T is well averred,
> "A Scientific faith's absurd,
> "--Frustrates the very end 't was meant
> "To serve.
>
> (11. 123-126)

He then goes on to show his contempt for science by making fun of a bug collector.[30]

> "One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
> "Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
> "In patient hope, that ten years hence,
> "'Somewhat completer,' he may say,
> "'My list of coleopters!'"
>
> (11. 150-154)

Since Nature was not adequate for Browning and Science was inadequate, the poet turned to Love.

> Love is ever with the author of "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day," as with the soliloquist, of worth immeasurably greater than mere intellect.[31]

In "Christmas-Eve" the poet is able to return to the chapel and not to be disturbed by the congregation to appreciate the minister's sermon, and finally

> To conclude with the doxology.
>
> (l. 1359)

Thus, the narrator joins with his fellow men, literally in song and spiritually in mind, in the praise of God. Before his transformation, the narrator would not have honestly been able to do that. Also, in "Easter-Day" the poet asks not vindictive-

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[30]Crowell, p. 20.

[31]Naish, p. 111.

ly, but out of acceptance.

> Upon the ground
> "'That in the story had been found
> "'Too much love! How could God love so?'
> (11. 977-979)

Browning too has accepted love in the same manner as Tennyson. Tennyson concludes in "The Princess" that love is the answer for Princess Ida. Also, in "In Memoriam" Tennyson conquers his doubts by means of love. There is a difference though between "In Memoriam" and Browning's two poems of 1850.

> That representative, as He appears in "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day," is no Arthur Hallam, no personification of human love: He is the Being whom Christina Rossetti calls "The Lord God Almighty Jesus Christ.[32]

Tennyson is thus more symbolic than Browning, but the love at which both men arrive is similar.

In 1855, Browning saw progress in yet another light--that of the progress of art. The major problem between Fra Lippo Lippi and the Prior, it will be remembered, is that of realism versus the ideal in art. The Prior wants Lippi to paint as he wished things were. Lippi thought rather that:

> Man as he is, is the subject, paint him as he is, and the soul will shine through the flesh. This was a discovery indeed, and Browning continually celebrates the great advance made by the realists in art.[33]

Lippi then has faith in mankind as he is and also faith in

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[32]Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry, Vol. IV (New York; 1957), p. 137.

[33]William Clyde DeVane, Browning's Parlyings (New Haven; 1927), p. 229.

his type of art as opposed to the Prior's. Lippi foresees that his art will evolve at last into philosophy of art:

> You understand me: I'm a beast, I know
> But see, now--why, I see as certainty
> As that the morning-star's about to shine,
> What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
> Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
> Slouches and stares and lets no atoms drop:
> His name is Guidi--he'll not mind the monks--
> They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk--
> He picks my practice up--he'll paint apace,
> I hope so--though I never live so long,
> I know what's sure to follow.
>
> (11. 270-280)

Through Lippi, Browning is telling the Victorians to be realistic about their world; that they should not try to "paint" their world to suit themselves. Only through seeing the world realistically could it advance for the Victorians. There can be no progress for anyone in anything unless one steps back and views realistically the situation as it is so that real and effective change can be made.

The three theories of art in Victorian England, it will be remembered, concerned reality, non-reality, and reality tinged with non-reality. Thus, the art espoused by Lippi was of the first school, that of reality. This school included David Ramsay Hay, Ford Maddox Brown, and William Holman Hunt. When Browning read "Fra Lippo Lippi" at his home on Dorset Street on September 27, 1855, some people were enthusiastic, but some definitely were not. Those who espoused the Pre-Raphaelite ideas so prevalent of the day were quite incensed since the artistic philosophy of Lippi ran counter

to their philosophy.[34] It might be assumed then that Browning was not wholly popular with the Pre-Raphaelites.

Progress is discussed in Cleon in yet another manner. Cleon, a first century Greek poet, feels vitally that even in that early period of history, everything has been done, that there is nothing left to do. Cleon says he has decided on "the true proportions of a man," "written three books on the soul," and invented a mood in music. What is there left to do? Cleon, however, does not take credit for doing all these things single-handedly, but does give credit to those who have passed before him. He says:

> Marvel not
> We of these latter days, with greater mind
> Than our forerunners, since more composite
> Look not so great, beside their simple way....
> (11. 63-66)

Even though Cleon is happy with the success that has been gained, he feels the need of most men to continue to progress when he cries:

> And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
> To vindicate his purpose in our life:
> Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
> (11. 112-114)

This then is one facet of Cleon's problem.

Even though Cleon feels that all has been done, the means by which it was done, the progress involved, seem quite advanced for first century thinking, and they indicate, in part, the nineteenth century doctrine of progress. Cleon sees

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[34] DeVane, Parleyings, p. 234.

the progress of Man as the growth of the individual contributing to the growth of the race.[35] Certainly, Carlyle would agree that this progress cannot be a group project, but rather an individual project. Cleon says in lines 139 through 144 that such artists as Homer, Terpander, and Phidias were great in their own rights, but all have contributed to Cleon's growth. He says:

> I am not great as they are, point by point
> But I entered into sympathy
> With these four, running these into one soul....
> (11. 142-144)

All of this lofty progress, however, does not satisfy Cleon.

> The progress is accomplished by the individual's adding himself, his life and work, to the world's life and losing himself. There is small comfort for the individual in the progress of the race, if the individual soul perishes.[36]

Cleon has tried to substitute learning, art, and achievements for the soul, but there are the limitations of the flesh that only the soul can transcend. Thus Cleon laments:

> But alas,
> The soul now climbs it just to perish there!
> (11. 235-236)

To Cleon then, the theory of progress has degenerated:

> Most progress is most failure: thou sayest well.
> (1. 272)

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[35] Ibid., p. 34.

[36] Harrington, pp. 158-159.

Cleon becomes, consequently, completely terrified because all this progress on earth is for naught. He is frightened that there was no immortality and says:

> It is so horrible,
> I dare at times imagine to my need
> Some future state revealed to us by Zeus....
> (11. 323-325)

But the Greek religion was not able to accept the immortality as Christians view it, so Cleon says:

> Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
> He must have done so, were it possible!
> (11. 334-335)

After the negation of immortality by the Greek religion, Cleon moves slightly to Christianity. He has heard of two men, Paulus and Christus, and thinks they may be the same man. It is ironic though that Cleon, in his despair, dismisses the religion that espouses great immortality. Cleon says:

> Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.
> (l. 353)

Thus, Cleon is paradoxical in relation to the idea of progress. It would seem that he accepts the material progress of mankind, but is completely ignorant about the progress of an individual soul. It could be conjectured that Browning was aiming his criticism through Cleon at the middle-class mid-century Victorians. The Victorians were interested in the progress of mankind as evidenced in The Crystal Palace, but it is difficult to imagine that a booth was constructed at the Great Exhibition to deal with men's souls.

Hence, Browning was vitally interested in progress, not just one phase of Victorian progress, but, it would seem, all phases. Just in this selection of his poetry, progress has been seen in humble work, materialism, spiritual matters, and art. Not only was Robert Browning eclectic in subject matter, but he was also diversified in the themes he employed.

HYPOCRISY

Some critics feel that almost all of Browning's career was one of hypocrisy because of the use of the dramatic monologues.[37] It does seem true that Browning was more successful in the monologues than when writing without a persona. His wife believed he should be writing from himself instead of hiding behind a character. She evidenced this concern when she urged Browning to speak for himself. The results of this urging were the companion poems, "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day." In discussion of these two poems Browning said, "I shall say what I think. Had Shelley lived he would have finally ranged himself with the Christians."[38] Thus, Browning felt that if Shelley, his literary hero, would have agreed with him, then it was correct to write the things he did. Hypothetical as Browning's supposition was, it gave him solace.

Nonetheless, it does not seem that Browning was hypocritical in his use of the dramatic monologue. This was the

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[37]William A Madden, "The Victorian Sensibility," Victorian Studies, VII (1963), p. 86. Some think that, since Browning's early works which were not dramatic monologues were not successful, Browning could not adequately express himself without putting his words into the mouth of someone else.

[38]Betty Miller, p. 174.

genre which he could do best. One does not say that Shakespeare was hypocritical because he spoke through Feste, the Clown in "Twelfth Night." Nor was John Milton hypocritical when he spoke through the Chorus of Danites in "Samson Agonistes." Thus, it does not follow that Browning was hypocritical just because of his use of the dramatic monologue and the use of characters who were sometimes personas.

Even though Browning himself was not hypocritical in his monologues, there are traces of hypocrisy and also sincerity within the monologues.

Certainly, a poem which displays much pronounced hypocrisy is "The Bishop Orders His Tomb." First, the very idea of a dying bishop ordering a tomb of the finest peach marble is a violation of what the truly religious man should be thinking of at the time of death. The Bishop who has ostensibly spent his entire life in the service of God has really not spent any time doing so and does not even at death. The Bishop is still not able to lift his eyes from earth to heaven.

The Bishop also orders his sons to erect the tomb. Certainly, the celibacy rule was in effect for the Roman clergy in the sixteenth century, and the Bishop has spent a good share of his life breaking a strict rule of the Church. The sons are, it seems, guilty of hypocrisy also. As one reads the poem, he gathers that the sons have no intention of erecting the tomb as the Bishop wishes and are sad at the

death of their father. The Bishop cries to the sons:

> There, leave me, there!
> For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
> To death--ye wish it--God, ye wish it!
> (ll. 113-115)

The Bishop is also guilty of the sins of hate, pride, and avarice. None of these sins are unforgivable in the sight of God, but certainly the Bishop is either ignorant of his sins or does not care about them. In effect then, there is nothing genuine or sincere about a man who is an espoused churchman.

It follows then that the Bishop has no interest in the Church, its creeds, faith, and even God.[39] There is no mention of the Bishop's commending his soul to God. Rather, his last thoughts are that Gandolf still envies him about the mother of the Bishop's sons.

After Browning's strong vendetta against the hypocrisy of men such as the Bishop of Saint Praxed's, he turned to more religious speculations in his two poems of 1850. In "Christmas-Eve" the poet surveys the three creeds which were those of the Dissenters, Catholics, and rationalists. At the beginning of the poem, the poet feels disgust for the churches. A description of the buildings of India by Berdoe seems to apply to the way Browning feels in the beginning. Berdoe says that many churches are like the wooden buildings in India which are eaten away by white ants. They appear solid, but when a wind

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[39]Fotheringham, p. 196.

comes they fall apart because the ants have eaten them through.[40] After the questioning and searching experience of Browning though, he is able to see the good, not just the undesirable points in religion.

In addition to the churches being hypocritical, so is the narrator himself. He goes initially to the Dissenter's Chapel and pays no attention to the sermon or God since, for him, God is not there. His only concern is with the boy with a cough, the woman who sounds as she walks like whale bones cracking, and the rest of the congregation. When he returned, however, he joined in the chorus and in the doxology. Thus, the religious skeptic and hypocrite at the beginning of the poem is partially converted.[41]

And finally, in "Fra Lippo Lippi," one is able to see the hypocrisy of the Prior's theory through the eyes of Lippi. The Prior demands that Lippi paint idealistically. The Prior says:

> "Your business is not to catch men with show,
> "With homage to the perishable clay,
> "But lift them over it, ignore it all,
> "Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
> "Your business is to paint the souls of men....
> (11. 179-183)

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[40]Berdoe, p. 136.

[41]Browning never really was a church-goer in the Dissenter's Church or any other church, but he did, in the main, accept the doctrines or beliefs of that faith. Since his mother was a Dissenter, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's statement that, the faith of Browning's mother was his is applicable in this instance.

But Lippi replies:

> Now, is this sense, I ask?
> A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
> So ill.
> (ll. 198-200)

Thus Lippi reveals his dislike of the Prior because of his inability to see and his desire to avoid reality.

There is also the suggestion that the Prior is not living up to his vows, much like the Bishop of Saint Praxed's. Lippi says that the Prior has a niece who comes

> "To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
> (l. 171)

Certainly Lippi does not live up to his vows, but he is not hypocritical about it. He acknowledges the fact that he is not chaste, but says he was forced to make those vows at age eight and only made them then because he was starving and they assured him of food.

Thus, Browning was fond of pointing out people who were hypocritical and using them to demonstrate certain weaknesses of society. It should be said though that Browning, the man, was not particularly hypocritical, but his writing exhibited the hypocrisy in others.

In the twentieth century, most people say that Browning was a typical Victorian, however, if he were a Victorian, "he came to his own and his own received him not."[42] Not until late in the nineteenth century was Browning looked upon as a poet of rank. Probably the great popularity of Tennyson

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[42] F. R. G. Duckworth, Browning: Background and Conflict (New York; 1932), p. 33.

seemed to overpower all. A selection from "Bishop Blougram's Apology" summarizes quite well the personality--the mid-century Victorianism of Robert Browning.

> No, when the fight begins within himself,
> A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
> Satan looks up between his feet--both tug--
> He's left, himself, i'the middle: the soul wakes
> And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
> Never leave growing till the life to come!
> (11. 693-698)

CHAPTER IV

Matthew Arnold

In a letter written by Matthew Arnold to his mother in 1869, the poet candidly discussed his poetic ability and his relationship to the other major poets of the period, Tennyson and Browning. Arnold said:

> My poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigor and abundance than Browning, yet, because I have perhaps more fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied the fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely to have my turn as they have had theirs.[1]

Certainly, there is no more fitting introduction to a discussion of the mid-century Victorian poetry of Matthew Arnold than the introduction he himself offered.

Many things could be said generally about Arnold and his Age as he was not only a fine poet, but an extraordinary critic of the Age. Since he was not only a poet, but also a public employee, a school inspector, he was able to view the world not only from the sublime position of the artist, but also from the more common existence. Thus Jamison points out that

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[1]Matthew Arnold, Letters of Matthew Arnold, collected and arranged by George W. E. Russell (New York, 1895, II p. 10.

> Arnold regarded the nineteenth century as a revolutionary age in which the traditional world view, rendered obsolete by the triumph of romantic thought, must be replaced by a new "order of ideas" in keeping with new discoveries in all areas of knowledge.[2]

It can be said then of Arnold:

> Inspired by his vision of the past, Arnold became the most influential critic of the Victorian era because he assimilated the views of his age, corrected their eccentricities and excesses, and stated them in a more coherent and consistent form.[3]

It is then the purpose of this chapter to examine representative poems in the light of the characteristics of Victorianism included in each and generally, how the Age is reflected in them: "Written in Emerson's Essays," "The Foresaken Merman," "Progress," "Tristram and Iseult," "Empedocles on Etna," and "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse."

DUALITY

In one sense, the duality or twoness of Arnold's poetry is attributable to the personality and life of Arnold himself in addition to the dual temper of the time. Arnold's life may easily be divided into two periods: the period of poetry and the period of school inspection.

> What separates the two terms in the soul-shaking decision about art, love, and faith that Arnold made some time during the years 1848-1851.[4]

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[2]William A. Jamison, Arnold and the Romantics (Copenhagen; 1958), p. 25.

[3]Ibid., p. 15.

[4]Howard W. Fulweiler, "Matthew Arnold: The Metaphysics of a Merman," Victorian Poetry, I (1963), p. 222.

Arnold never really abandoned poetry, but rather spent less time on it after his decision to enter public service. The work of school inspector stemmed, it seems, from the Victorian concept of duty, but it could be assumed that Arnold was less than satisfied in that endeavor as he wrote to Mrs. Forster in 1851:

> I have had a hard day. Thirty pupil's teachers to examine in an inconvenient room, and nothing to eat except a biscuit, which a charitable lady gave me. I was asked to dinner, this time at five, but excused myself on the grounds of work.[5]

It might be conjectured that the work that he excused himself for was that of working on a poem.

Intellectually, Arnold was divided. Through his interest in Heine and Goethe, "the dual nature of his interest comes out; it is an interest in 'intellectual deliverance' and in 'moral deliverance' together." The Goethe element would be the moral influence and the Heine part would be the intellectual.[6] This duality of deliverance is evidenced in many of Arnold's poems, including "The Foresaken Merman," "Tristram and Iseult," and "Empedocles on Etna." Arnold, in fact, consciously doubted many intellectual and religious concepts as did many other Victorians. He doubted

> "Not only the Christian religion"...but all the orthodoxies, idealist and materialist, Romantic and scientific.

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[5]Matthew Arnold, Poetry and Prose, John Bryson (ed.) (Cambridge, 1954), p. 741.

[6]Vincent Buckley, Poetry and Morality (London, 1959), p. 61.

> He alternately holds and attacks almost every possible Victorian position.[7]

In the short poem, "Written in Emerson's Essays," Arnold acknowledges one of the "prophets by whom his youth was formed."[8] Arnold is not, however, fully praising Emerson though. Rather, he is going through a process of questioning the doctrine not only of Emerson, but of other philosophies.

> There are such things as philosophical poetry and the union of oracle and artist, but because of the division and conflicts in the intellectual life of his age and the lack of clarity or system in any available synthetic view, almost any Victorian poet must find it difficult to be at once precisely philosophical and satisfactorily poetic.[9]

This is brought out in the final stanza of the poem when Arnold asks the basic question, "Who are we?" He asks:

> The seeds of godlike power are in us still;
> Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will!
> Dumb judges, answer truth or mockery?
> (ll. 12-14)[10]

He states that mankind has the power to be great, but how many really take advantage of this ability, and, certainly, if man takes advantage of the ability, what doctrine does he accept? What does he follow? Will mankind be a "bard, saint, hero"

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[7]Edward Dudley Hume Johnson, The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry (Princeton, 1961), p. 39.

[8]E. K. Brown, Matthew Arnold: A Study in Conflict (Chicago, 1966), p. 140.

[9]Johnson, p. 40.

[10]This quotation and all subsequent quotations from Arnold's poems will be taken from The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold, C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (eds.) (New York, 1950).

or a "dumb judge"? This shows the duality in the nature of mankind, and of an age that lauded prophets on one hand and on the other held its tongue so as not to "rock the boat."

"The Foresaken Merman" is another very good example of the duality of the Age. In this poem, there is a conflict between people and also between geography. Margaret, the mermaid, leaves the sea and goes to the land, deserting her husband and children in favor of a more ordered "religious" society. At her departure, Margaret gives her reason for leaving the sea:

> She said: 'I must go for my kinsfolk pray
> In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
> 'Twill be Easter-time in the world-ah me!
> And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee.
> (ll. 56-59)

It must be noted though that Margaret's Easter was not the successful one of Browning's poem, "Easter Day." "Easter symbolizes Margaret's ironic failure to accept real life. She is reborn not into life, but into spiritual death."[11] At the end of the poem the children sing:

> 'There dwells a loved one,
> But cruel is she!
> She left lonely for ever
> The king of the sea."
> (ll. 140-143)

Margaret has left the sea which represents "freedom, beauty, love, and responsibilities to others," and has moved to the land which symbolizes "convention, insensitivity to the deepest moral values, and monotonous, mechanical, incessant activity."[12]

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[11]Fulweiler, p. 212.

[12]Ibid.

Closely associated with this geographic duality is the duality of character. After the departure of Margaret, the merman is alone and so is Margaret.

> On the land, companionship results from communion, from common worship; men are brothers when they have one Father, marriages are made in the image of the divine spirit's marriage with the flesh. In the ocean, kinship derives from inanimate bonds, the bonds of the family which are those of living flesh alone. But either way without the other is imperfect.[13]

Thus, according to Arnold in this poem, there is no solution to this problem of duality. The bond of the flesh was not sufficient within itself, and neither was a pure bond of spirit.

Certainly this poem goes farther than merely the problem of marriage. Arnold is able to present the problems of "love versus duty, the social and moral problem of private meditation versus public action, and the aesthetic problem of art versus life."[14] In the poem, duty wins out over love, public action wins over public meditation, and life wins over art. All these supposed victories turn out to be failures as portrayed by Arnold. Margaret, the loving mother and wife at the beginning of the poem is transformed into a mermaiden with "cold strange eyes" after being on land for a time. Thus, cruelly and faithlessly she left the sea for the land and it could be advanced--as Arnold left poetry for the school inspectorship.

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[13]Johnson, p. 99.

[14]Fulweiler, p. 212.

Another poem which is similar to "The Foresaken Merman" in that both concern the two sexes is "Tristram and Iseult." This poem concerns Tristram, Iseult of Brittany, and Iseult of Ireland. It is important that Arnold has portrayed the two Iseults as being complete opposites; and between the two, it would seem, the complete woman is shown.

> Like most nineteenth-century doubles, the two Iseults are not really distinct persons but rather different aspects of the same personality. This is indicated by the fact that Arnold has chosen to entitle his poem simply Tristram and Iseult--in the singular--without specifying which Iseult is meant. Clearly, he means both: Tristram (the "man of sorrows") and the "Iseult element" in modern life, namely, woman.[15]

Iseult of Brittany is viewed by Arnold:

> Her looks are mild, her fingers slight
> As the driven snow are white....
> (I, ll. 30-31)

And, she is further described:

> I know her by her mildness rare,
> Her snow-white hands, her golden hair;
> I know her by her rich silk dress,
> And her fragile lovliness--
> The sweetest Christian soul alive,
> Iseult of Brittany.
> (I, ll. 505-55)

Thus, Iseult of Brittany is described with images of light; her hair is also light. These images indicate her delicate purity. Iseult of Ireland is much more worldly than Iseult of Brittany. The Ireland Iseult is married to King Marc,

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[15]A. O. Culler, Imaginative Reason (New Haven, 1966), p. 389.

and thus her relationship with Tristram is an illegal one. Also, unlike Iseult of Brittany, Iseult of Ireland does not immediately come to Tristram's side as he lies dying. Rather, she is detained by her husband while Tristram wonders:

> Art thou cold, or false, or dead,
> Iseult of Ireland?
> (I, ll. 81-82)

Iseult of Ireland finally comes, however, and there is certainly evidence that the latter Iseult loves Tristram as much as the former. But, the lady from Ireland is not as young as the one from Brittany.

> Ah, harsh flatterer! let alone my beauty!
> I, like thee, have left my youth afar.
> Take my hand, and touch these wasted fingers--
> See my cheek and lips, how white they are!
> (II, ll. 21-24)

In addition, Iseult of Ireland tries further to prove her love to Tristram when she says:

> What thou think'st this aching brow was cooler,
> Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold?
> (II, ll. 43-44)

In effect she is saying that she loves Tristram just as much as Iseult of Brittany even though she is married to another man, King Marc.

Thus, there is the comment by Arnold concerning the relationship between the sexes. The two Iseults are vastly different in respect to age, marital situation, and in some manner, purity. There is one characteristic, however, which is common in both relationships--that of love. Both women are very much in love with Tristram and he is in love with them.

It would then seem that Arnold is saying that as futile as a relationship might seem, if there is mutual love involved, then the relationship will not be a wasted one since "romantic love is invoked as a refuge from the loneliness which he felt so acutely...."[16]

A comment must be advanced, however, that Iseult of Ireland dies before Iseult of Brittany, and the former Iseult has children and is a good mother to them. This could be a moral comment by Arnold in the Victorian way that the pure women eventually wins over the decadent. It should be noted that even though Tristram is dead, Iseult of Brittany retains him in part through the presence of the children.

A word, however, should be said about the children of Iseult of Brittany and Tristram. In the first part of the poem there is the dual use of the word, "madcap." The first use of it is when Tristram is talking to Iseult of Ireland and he says:

> Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce-walks are drear--
> Madcap, what jist was this, to meet me here?
> (I, ll. 161-162)

In this quotation, Tristram is calling Iseult of Ireland "Madcap." The second time "madcap" is used is in reference to the children. After they have been on a walk, a more pleasant one than Tristram and Iseult of Ireland were on, they are addressed:

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[16]Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven, 1957), p. 389.

> --Ah, tired madcaps! You lie still;
> But were you at the window now,
> To look forth on the fairy sight
> Of your illumined haunts by night,
> To see the park-glades where you play
> Far lovelier than they are by day....
> (I, ll. 351-356)

Thus, the similarities between the walk and the use of "madcap" is more than coincidence. A. O. Culler suggests that as pure as the children seem presently, "they have it in them to become Iseult of Ireland's too."[17]

Another problem associated with duality in "Tristram and Iseult" lies within Tristram himself. A question posed in this poem is, "Can a man maintain a private vision of the world while engage in active life?"[18] Tristram feels that

> There's a secret in his breast
> Which will never let him rest.
> These musing fits in the green wood
> They cloud the brain, they dull the blood!
> (I, ll. 246-248)

Tristram feels that this "secret in his breast," his personal life, is clouding his brain or conflicting with his public life or duty. It would seem then that Arnold felt that the world was more and more comfortable for the masses and uncomfortable for the gifted.

> More significantly, the central trouble of Empedocles and Tristram in the major poems of the collection of 1852 is that they cannot both maintain their private visions of the universe and share the common life of men.[19]

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[17]Culler, p. 147.

[18]M. G. Sundell, "The Intellectual Background and Structure of Arnold's 'Tristram and Iseult,'" Victorian Poetry I (1963), p. 277.

[19]Ibid., p. 276.

Finally, setting is important in this poem because of its dual nature. Much time is spent discussing the verdant forest.

> The forest and its green are associated with birth and death, passion and enchantment, love and loneliness, and there is always something at once mysteriously dark and vital about the setting.[20]

In addition,

> These objects [the colors, the figures, the landscapes] are arranged in patterns of contrast, of light and dark, heat and cold, land and sea, which, along with the brilliant use of colors, give the sensuous correlative for idea and emotion: for the urge toward death and that toward life, for passion and the denial of passion.[21]

Just one example of how nature is described in a dual role is "the blossom'd thorn-tree" (l. 218). The blossom is sweet and the thorn is unpleasant. This bitter-sweet idea is espoused in the entire poem. The bitter-sweet idea can be associated with Tristram in that his feelings toward both the Iseults are both bitter and sweet. It is sweet to have the love of both women, but it is bitter to have to choose between the two. Also, it is sweet for Tristram and the Iseult of Ireland to carry on the affair, but it is immoral and illegal which would imply the bitter angle.

"Empedocles on Etna" is another example of the duality of the Age. Five years after Arnold wrote "Empedocles on Etna," he gave a lecture at Oxford University and stated quite clearly his feelings about the poem:

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[20]Johnson, p. 99.

[21]Ibid., p. 96.

> The demand arises, because our present age has around it a copious and complex present, and behind it a copious and complex past; it arises, because the present age exhibits to the individual man who contemplates it the spectacle of a vast multitude of fact awaiting and inviting his comprehension. The deliverance consists in man's comprehension of this present and past.... He who has found that point of view, he who adequately comprehends this spectacle, has risen to the comprehension of his age: he who communicates that point of view to his age, he who interprets to it that spectacle, is one of his age's intellectual deliverers.[22]

It could be advanced that "Empedocles on Etna" was very much of a high water mark in the poetic career of Arnold. "Arnold intended that poetry serve as a bridge between man and the world surrounding him...."[23] Empedocles himself is the embodiment of the being caught in the middle of an age which spawned him, but could not accept him; nor could he accept it. In this way the entire poem, portrays the Victorian Age.

> The Empedocles-Pausanian mind, the mind of the modern intellectual, turns from an infected world inward upon itself and scorns any other resources. Callicles, symbol of the classical ideal expressed through its most perfect medium, accepts the world about him as sound and beautiful. At the same time he realizes that some may have a distorted vision of it.[24]

Empedocles, Pausanias and Callicles represent three different philosophies. The physician, Pausanias, represents

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[22]Walter E. Houghton, "Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna,'" Victorian Studies, I (1958), p. 315.

[23]Barbara Charlesworth, Dark Passages: The Decadent Consciousness in Victorian Literature (Madison, 1965), p. 64.

[24]Warren D. Anderson, Matthew Arnold and The Classical Tradition (Ann Arbor, 1965), p. 38.

the intellectual side of the Victorian period. The harp-player, Callicles, on the other hand, represents emotion, or the sensual side of Victorianism. Thus, the duality is set up with Empedocles in the middle. Each vies for the attention of Empedocles and tries to aid him by his particular philosophy. The problem comes, however, when Empedocles is unable to accept either doctrine. In their arguing about Empedocles, Pausanias and Callicles try to convince each other of the truth in their philosophies. Pausanias says to Callicles:

> Thou must be viewless to Empedocles;
> Save mine, he must not meet a human eye.
> One of his moods is on him that thou know'st;
> I think, thou wouldst not vex him.
> (I, ll. 52-55)

Callicles, however, retorts that:

> No--and yet
> I would fain stay, and help thee tend him. Once....
> He knew me well, and would oft notice me.
> (I, ll. 55-57)

Finally Callicles states:

> Thou know'st of old he loved this harp of mine,
> When first he sojourn'd with Peisianax;
> He is now always moody, and I fear him;
> But I would serve him, soothe him, if I could,
> Dared one but try.
> (I, ll. 72-76)

Empedocles, however, is unable to accept either point of view and, in fact, is unable to find any point of view in sympathy with his. Thus, he is isolated, alone. His only solution after much debating is the suicidal leap into the crater. In contemplation of his death, Empedocles states:

> I am weary of thee.
> I am weary of the solitude....
> (II, 11. 198-199)

He also states:

> Take thy bough, set me free from my solitude;
> I have been enough alone!
> (II, 11. 218-219)

Thus, there is no hope for Empedocles in his dualistic society. He feels there was no hope, and release is death. In a sense, Arnold, himself could be Empedocles.

> The introspective man of thought brooding upon his wrongs and the barrenness of the time, ill at ease in solitude as in society, has no common language with the poet, whose thoughts radiate outward. Arnold himself embodied this dilemma.[25]

The tragedy then of the poem is not just the tragedy of Empedocles or Arnold. It is also the tragedy of a period becoming "fragmented" by many divergent opinions and even unable, in many cases, to make any positive moves; thus, "paralyzed by indecision."[26]

Probably two of the most famous lines written by Arnold are found in "Stanzas From The Grande Chartruese." These lines also exhibit much of the duality of the Age:

> Wandering between two world, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born....
> (11. 85-86)

Arnold is referring to the feudal Christian world which is "dead" and the modern world which is "powerless to be born."

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[25] Ibid., p. 45.

[26] Edward Alexander, Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill (New York, 1965), p. 125.

However, the two worlds of the Grande Chartreuse are the worlds of organized Christian faith and that of the more genuine faith that must surely come sometime. "In spite of Victorian church-going," Arnold and many other Victorians felt that this organized religion was not a vital one.[27]

Bonnerot, the French critic, advanced the following theory concerning this poem:

> C'est la coexistence de ces deux mondes et la va et vient de sa pensée de l'un a l'autre qui créent son malaise, sa Mélancolie, son romantisme. Arnold ne conçoit pas de compromis ves-a-vis de la du passé; elle appartient a cette "aspiration rétrospective", a ce thème du "retour en arrière" qui accompagne en sourdine toute la littérature romantique et une bonne partie de la littérature victorienne.[28]

The problem of duality seems to be a motif running through many of Arnold's works. For Arnold, when two opposing doctrines are present, there seems to be no way for growth. Rather, when opposing forces clash, one seems, like Empedocles, to commit suicide or to "wander between two worlds." Arnold sees a ray of hope, and this will be discussed in the section concerning "Progress."

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[27]Henry Charles Duffin, Arnold The Poet (London, 1962), p. 108.

[28]Louis Bonnerot, Matthew Arnold: Poete (Paris: 1947), p. 173. It is the co-existance of these two worlds and the coming and going of this thought of one another that creates his sickness, his melancholy, his romanticism. Arnold does not know how to compromise that which is past; it is apparent in this "retrospective aspiration," this theme of "returning to the past" which accompanies nearly all the romantic literature and a good part of the Victorian literature.

PROGRESS

The theory of progress which Arnold espouses seems different from those ideas espoused earlier in the persons of Carlyle, Tennyson, and Browning. One critic has stated, and rightly so, that typically Victorians needed to affirm either the "No" or the "Yea," as was exemplified earlier in Carlyle's Sartor Resartus. This critic says though that Arnold seems to stay in the "No."[29] This point is debatable though as there is evidence that Arnold was certainly not always pessimistic and negative.

> Arnold was troubled by the vision of universal change governing all human affairs of past, present, and foreseeable future and on occasion was even driven to imagine with dismay "For regions of eternal change" beyond human experience altogether.[30]

Thus, Arnold was certainly upset much of the time with the condition of the world, perhaps more upset than Tennyson and Browning, but in 1852 Arnold wrote to his friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, "...nothing can absolve us from the duty of doing all we can to keep alive our courage and activity."[31] This does not sound like a person who is in the throes of "The Everlasting No." Rather, Arnold's idea concerning progress was restrained:

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[29]Johnson, p. 7.

[30]Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Triumph of Time (Cambridge, 1966), p. 12. Note: The Arnold quote can be found in "The Scholar-Gypsey," "Stanzas in Memory of the author of 'Oberman,'" and "Resignation."

[31]John Shepard Eels, Jr., The Touchstones of Matthew Arnold (New York, 1955), p. 182.

> As a humanist Arnold conceived of life in terms of civilization, and as a liberal he viewed it in terms of progress. He was too intelligent to fall into an easy optimism; as his poetry reveals, he was painfully aware of the obstacles to human progress which exist in man's nature and of the presence in the universe of powers beyond man's control. Yet he clung to the belief that through the use of his intellect man could overcome the animal part of his nature and create a society in which humanity could attain its destined perfection.[32]

Poetry to Arnold was the best means for achieving this perfection and solving the problems of his age. This was a very typical reaction or thought of the Victorians: viewing poets as prophets or problem-solvers.

Arnold was specifically interested in his own age. He did draw on the past for his subject matter for his poems, but the ancient sources were brought up to date so that the points that they made were quite contemporary.

> This modernity /of Arnold/ consists largely in what we may call his representative self-consciousness, in his sense of the age in which he lives as an age both special and historically important.[33]

Certainly Arnold was not totally in favor of progress. The progressive factories produced terrible working conditions that Arnold immediately recognized, but progress was separated for Arnold in two parts: "progress in sweetness and light" and "the number of the railroads he /man/ has constructed, or the bigness of the tabernacle he /man/ has built."[34] Thus,

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[32]Jamison, p. 27.

[33]Vincent Buckley, p. 54.

[34]Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Triumph of Time, p. 61. Note: The Arnold quotations are from Culture and Anarchy, Prose Works, V, p. 108.

Arnold was interested in the progress of "sweetness and light" rather than of the industrial progress which produced decadence.

It will be noted though that:

> Arnold was not an originator but a disseminator of ideas; this is the way he saw himself and his mission. He was willing whenever necessary to make tactical sacrifices if by so doing he could advance his strategic purpose.[35]

It is fitting that Arnold would discuss the idea of progress in his short poem, "Written In Emerson's Essays," since both he and Emerson were:

> ...concerned first of all with the place of men in a world where spiritual forces were disintegrating, and where "getting and spending" consumed all their powers.[36]

Arnold was first associated with Emerson through Clough. Arnold first met Emerson in 1848, and when Clough traveled to Boston to meet Emerson in 1852, Arnold asked Clough, "What does Emerson say to my poems? Make him look at [them]." Although Emerson was renowned as a transcendentalist, Arnold even though there are traces of the philosophy in evidence in his poetry, tended to remain primarily in the phenomenal rather than moving quickly to the noumena as Emerson was prone to do.[37] There is, however, a transcendental image used in the poem concerning Emerson.

> The seeds of godlike power are in us still....
> (l. 12)

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[35]Leon Albert Gottfried, Matthew Arnold and the Romantics (Lincoln, 1963), p. 66.

[36]R. H. Super, "Emerson and Arnold's Poetry," Philological Quarterly, XXXIII (1954), p. 400.

[37]Ibid., p. 397.

The "seeds" suggest that all men have the ability to raise themselves to greater heights than they traditionally do. Each man can transcend time and space to be more "godlike" if he only will. Arnold, however, bemoans the fact that even though we have this ability we do not do it. He states in pessimism:

> Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery?
> (l. 14)

Thus, the hope is there, but certainly not the resounding affirmation of faith suggested by Carlyle's "Produce! Produce!"

It is fitting to include in the discussion of Arnold's view of progress his poem entitled, "Progress." In this little known poem, Arnold portrays Christ standing on a mountain talking with his disciples. Christ is rebuking his disciples because the fire or earnestness has gone out of religion. Christ says:

> 'Religious fervours! Ardour misapplied!
> Hence, hence, 'they say,' Ye do but keep men blind!
> But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,
> And lame the active mind!'
> (ll. 17-20

Rather than being full of religious fervour which is nothing but meaningless words,

> Thou must be born again!
> (l. 44)

Arnold also calls for a "fire within" which symbolizes enthusiasm to Arnold.[38]

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[38]Erik Frykman, Bitter Knowledge and Unconquerable Hope (Stockholm, 1957), p. 56.

The poem "Progress" could be construed to be purely Christian in the nature of the reaffirmation of faith, especially because of the use of Christ. It seems, however, that Arnold also is discussing not only Christian conversion, but maybe such a transcendental experience as that of Teufelsdröckh even though Arnold was not a follower of Carlyle. The conclusion of this poem charges man with the typical Victorian admonition of duty:

> 'Children of men! not that your age excell
> In pride of life the ages of your sires,
> But that ye think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
> The Friend of man desires.
> (11. 45-48)

Whether this is a Christian charge or purely a moralistic one, it is not so very different from that of Carlyle's which was, "Do the Duty which lies nearest thee...."

The motif of progress portrayed in "Tristram and Iseult" is not so pronounced as that in the previous two poems discussed. Primarily, the idea of progress through duty and work is embodied in the character of Iseult of Brittany.

> "Iseult of Brittany" portrays one who may justly be termed stoical, free from the restlessness that Arnold criticizes so sharply. Dead to joy she follows the quiet paths of duty and lives for her children; only through stories of the enchanted past can she be "moved and soothed," forgetful of all that has been.[39]

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[39]Anderson, p. 138.

In explanation of how Iseult of Brittany is able to bear her bleak existence, Arnold says:

> This, or some tyrannous single thought, some fit
> Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,
> Till for its sake alone we live and move--
> Call it ambition, or remorse, or love--
> This too can change us wholly, and make seem
> All which we did before, shadow and dream.
> (III, ll. 127-132)

Thus, Iseult of Brittany is not a world conqueror or doer of great and monumental works. She is, though, an adherent of "The Everlasting Yea" in that she has discovered the "good" and "true" way of life, and is, in her small way, instilling the concept of progress in the minds of her children. In addition, she is keeping herself a sane and productive human being and not merely sitting still and letting the world fall down around her. She is then doing her duty in life.

Probably, one of the most positive statements of progress or lack of it is voiced in Arnold's 1852 poem, "Empedocles on Etna." Arnold, however, was not completely satisfied with his poem, and he tried to suppress it because he felt that it lacked the most important quality of poetry, objectivity.[40] This suppression did not last long though, and now the poem stands as one of Arnold's greatest works.

Even though Arnold, in effect, tried to "kill" the poem, there seems to be a particular attraction that Empedocles had for Arnold. Arnold, it could be conjectured, associated

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[40]Matthew Arnold, Preface to the First Edition, The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold, C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (eds.), p. xix.

himself with Empedocles. This will be discussed later. Also, for Arnold, Empedocles represented the age in which Arnold lived. This, too, will be discussed later. In addition, Arnold associated Empedocles with Hamlet. In Arnold's Preface to the First Edition he said this about Empedocles:

> Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern...the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and Faust.[41]

Thus, to Arnold, Empedocles was many things and was as timely as today and as timeless as the ancients. But Empedocles was not designed to be "just a peg on which to hang complaints about the times," for Arnold was interested in showing Empedocles as a particular person, an individual "psychological case."[42] Thus, Empedocles is many things to many people. This creates the great interest in a poem which its author tried to suppress.

Even though Arnold was certainly not a disciple of Thomas Carlyle, it is interesting that he held many of the same views as Carlyle. Arnold said later in 1876:

> I have always insisted that the only right way to an outward transformation was an inward one, and that the business for us and for our age was the latter.[43]

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[41] Ibid., p. xvii.

[42] Frykman, p. 38.

[43] Arnold, Letters of Matthew Arnold, II, p. 130.

This is very much like the "Baphometic Baptism" about which Carlyle writes. Empedocles, however, does not change inwardly so as to commit himself to public action as the hero does in Tennyson's "Maud" or the narrator does in Browning's "Christmas Eve." Empedocles, rather, finally makes the decision to plunge himself into the crater and so release himself from the indecision and complete lack of action which encumbers him throughout the poem. In a sense, Empedocles throws off the clothes of society, the wrapping of the society which hindered him, and reveals his true, inner nature in his decision. In his last speech Empedocles affirms:

> I feel it, I breathe free.
> Is it but for a moment?
> -Ah, boil up, ye vapours!
> Leap and roar, thou sea of fire!
> My soul glows to meet you.
> Ere it flag, ere the mists
> Of despondency and gloom
> Rush over it again,
> Receive me, save me!
>
> /He plunges into the crater./
> (II, ll. 408-416)

In a sense, Empedocles was Arnold himself. Jamison points out that

> With his own "Empedocles" in mind, Arnold rejects situations "in which the suffering finds no vent in action... in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done."[44]

Arnold himself did not literally plunge himself into a crater, but found "vent in action." The Victorian idea of work and

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[44]Jamison, p. 16.

and duty which produced progress was engrained in Arnold, no doubt primarily by his father at Rugby. Thus, Arnold could not remain in the "Everlasting No" and reject the world through his poetry. He felt as did the hero of "Maud" the need to go into public service. Thus, the school inspectorship provided this dutiful "action."

"Empedocles on Etna" has been labelled as "the completest Victorian rendering of the isolated and self-destructive poet ...."[45] The major theme in the poem is isolation from society. Empedocles was caught in the middle between the intellect of Pausanias and the creative force of Callicles. This theme of isolation is set down quite well in a song by Callicles in Act II:

> What anguish of greatness,
> Rail'd and hunted from the world,
> Because its simplicity rebukes
> This envious, miserable age!
> I am weary of it.
>
> (II, ll. 104-108)

Callicles is "weary" of the "miserable age" and so is Empedocles. Thus, Empedocles chooses to end it all with a negative action. The death is, of course, negative, but at last Empedocles acts individually and merges himself with nature.

Arnold also laments the idea that the "individual self" is being "immersed in social life." This is the identification of Empedocles' problems with those of the Victorian Age. Arnold sees little individualism and hates the pushy social

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[45]William A. Madden, "The Victorian Sensibility," Victorian Studies, VII (1963), p. 89.

world of the Victorians. In this manner, Empedocles represents anti-Victorian sentiment. The Victorians were so interested in the progress of establishing new factories and "getting and spending" that they often neglected the private and individual self. Carlyle would say, "produce it, in God's name!"[46] But Arnold would rephrase it thus, "Be yourself! In God's name!" Empedocles exemplifies progress; not the social progress commonly associated with the mid-century Victorian period, but the progress of a man's soul. This progress within Empedocles is only evident in that he had been encumbered in indecision for so long and at last was able to make a decision concerning his destiny. This was progress, even though it led to a negative end.

In pursuance of this comparison of Arnold and Carlyle and their respective ideas concerning progress, there seems to be a parallel between a stanza in "Stanzas From The Grande Chartreuse" and Carlyle's sentiments. In "Grande Chartreuse" Arnold says:

> Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
> More fortunate, alas! than we,
> Which without hardness will be sage,
> And gay without frivolity.
> Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;
> But, while we wait, allow our tears!
> (ll. 157-162)

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[46] See Footnote 21, Chapter One.

Concerning this, the critic Bonnerot says:

> Cette strophe implique nettement la croyance au Progrès, tout comme cette declaration parallele de Carlyle: Deep and sad is our feeling that we stand yet in the bodeful night; equally deep, indestructible is our assurance that the morning also will not fail. Nay already, as we look around, streaks of a dayspring are in the east; it is dawning; when the time shall be fulfilled, it will be day....[47]

The quotations of Arnold and Carlyle seem very similar, for the subject matter is the same: the hope for a better time to come. In addition, the same word choice is evident with the word, "dawn" by Arnold and the word, "dawning" by Carlyle. This could be merely a happy coincidence, but if it is, the irony is certainly present. If Arnold was so anti-Carlylian, their basic ideas were not so very far from each other. However, Arnold again is not speaking of the seeming materialism of Carlyle, but rather the progress of the soul, the individual man. Also, Arnold seems much less certain of the positive dawn than Carlyle.

The stanza immediately following the previously quoted one in "Stanzas From The Grande Chartreuse" also appears very pro-progress.

> Allow them! We admire with awe
> The exulting thunder of your race;
> You give the universe your law,

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[47]Bonnerot, p. 177. This stanza implies nearly the understanding of Progress, which very much parallels that statement of Carlyle.

> You triumph over time and space!
> Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
> We laud them, but they are not ours.
> (11. 163-168)

The first part of this stanza sounds very much like the optimism of Tennyson, especially in his "Locksley Hall" and the last part of "In Memoriam." However, the last line adds the note of pessimism which usually seems present in Arnold's work. E. K. Brown says:

> The poet speaks with almost breathless admiration of the progress in exploration and discovery, in transport and communications; he responds to the appeal of gaiety and movement. But for all his sympathy with the manifestations of the modern world, he underlines his own distance from them in the last line.[48]

As much as Arnold seems to be speaking out in favor of progress throughout this poem; there is a distinct anti-progress tone at the end of the poem. Arnold sees no progress taking place in the abbey. There is no public-mindedness; there is no creative thinking taking place. Rather, Arnold sees the cloistered life as a "desert" and a place of sterility. He says

> And leave our desert to its peace!
> (1. 210)

Peace is usually considered a desirable condition and quite synonymous with the good, but it is not possible to have progress in a "peaceful" and tranquil state. Just as the essay, "On The Need For A Quiet University" by Stephen Leacock, points out, if all things are quiet, if all things are static, no one

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[48]Brown, p. 46.

will see the need, have the initiative, and finally act.[49] Thus, progress will be stymied and there will be the anti-progress about which Arnold writes.

Thus, Arnold was somewhat in favor of progress. He was not, however, in favor of the pushing, and overt industrial progress. But rather, he was interested in the progress of man to create within himself a better human being.

HYPOCRISY

The discussion of hypocrisy does not seem to be terribly relevant in the study of the Victorianism of Matthew Arnold. The poet was an honest individual and disliked hypocrisy. Even though he, no doubt, saw the hypocrisy in his age, he was more concerned about discovering himself in society and society's discovering itself. Arnold did criticize his age in a letter to Clough in 1849 which hints at the hypocrisy of the times in which he lived:

> These are damned times--everything is against one--the height to which knowledge is come, the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great natures, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, newspapers, cities, light profligate friends, moral desperados like Carlyle, our own selves, and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties.[50]

Thus, Arnold was not blind to the foibles of his time, but rather, it seems did not dwell on them.

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[49]Carolyn Shrodes, Clifford Josephson, and James R. Wilson, Reading For Rhetoric (New York; 1962), pp. 214-219.

[50]Arnold, Poetry and Prose, Bryson (ed.), p. 740.

Probably, one of the biggest weaknesses of Matthew Arnold and indeed of his entire age was his sentiment. Vincent Buckley says this concerning sentiment:

> Sentiment was a weakness in Arnold and a weakness in Victorian England. The attempt to make religion manageable reduced it to poetry. Even the Oxford Movement was, on the whole, doctrinal without a metaphysic; hence, the charges of ritualism could be made, with some plausibility, against many of its members. And the Victorians generally seem to have concentrated too exclusively on religious devotion as the summation, the natural result, of moral sentiment, far too little on the metaphysical and mystical insight which Christianity embodies, and to which it leads.[51]

It is possible Arnold had detected this over-abundance of sentimentality in religion in "Stanzas From The Grande Chartreuse" when he rejected the life in the cloistered abbey and finally gave up in desperation, declaring that man is

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born....
> (11. 85-86)

"The Victorians were specialists (for good or ill) in the husband-wife relation."[52] The subject of marriage is treated in one of Arnold's poems that have been chosen for discussion, "The Foresaken Merman." A form of hypocrisy is present in "The Foresaken Merman" in the characters of Margaret and the congregation of the church. Margaret leaves her family to go to the land and civilization. Towards the end of the poem, however, there is the comment concerning

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[51]Vincent Buckley, p. 26.

[52]Duffin, p. 75.

how she feels on the land. She, at first, seems very happy with her new life on the land

> She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
> Singing most joyfully.
> Hark what she sings: 'O joy, O joy,
> For the humming street, and the child with its toy!
> For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well....
> (11. 87-91)

This, in a sense, is hypocritical to the mid-century Victorian since it was not supposed to be correct for the Evangelical to be happy or joyful in the service of the Lord. But, further on in the comment there is a change in mood.

> Singing most joyfully,
> Till the spindle drops from her hand,
> And the whizzing wheel stand still.
> She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
> And over the sand at the sea;
> And her eyes are set in a stare;
> And anon there breaks a sigh,
> And anon there drops a tear,
> From a sorrow-clouded eye,
> And a heart sorrow-laden,
> A long, long sigh;
> For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden
> And the gleam of her golden hair.
> (11. 95-107)

This change in Margaret indicates that she is not inwardly as happy as she might seem, and that she still longs for her life of the sea. It should be noted also that she "steals" to the window, which indicates unlawfulness. Thus, it would seem, she is hypocritical in her decision.

Hypocrisy would also apply to the congregation of that church. They are so wrapped up in their hymn singing and

praying for their own souls that they do not even bother to notice the merman and his little children peeping in the windows looking for their loved one. Both Margaret and the church people are oblivious to the pleading of the sea creatures:

> 'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!
> Dear heart, 'I said, 'we are long alone;
> The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'
> But, ah, she gave me never a look,
> For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book!
> Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
> (ll. 77-82)

The last line could be a comment on the religiosity of the Victorians when "The Great Social Evil," poor working conditions in factories, and horrible slums were the common sights of the city.

In 1850, Arnold wrote the poem, "Memorial Verses," in honor of the Great Exposition. In this poem he praises one of the greatest poets, in his opinion ever to write, Goethe. It seems as though the following lines written about Goethe by Arnold could also apply to Arnold himself:

> He took the suffering human race,
> He read each wound, each weakness clear;
> And struck his finger on the place,
> And said: Thou ailest here, and here!
> (ll. 19-22)

CHAPTER V

Conclusion: The Three Writers In Perspective

The three major poets of the Victorian period between 1845 and 1855 have been discussed separately. It is now desirable to examine these men in perspective and to compare and contrast these men in accordance with the three Victorian characteristics which have been utilized throughout this study.

It has been said that Tennyson's man would go into the field, till it, and "lie beneath." Browning's man, however, "would have concentrated on the tilling of the field, with an agricultural passion."[1] It might also be advanced that Arnold's man might not go to the field at all, but rather wander around debating in what manner he should till the field, but always sensing the need for the field to be tilled.

To facilitate a deeper comparison and contrast of Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold, the same procedure will be employed, using duality, progress, and hypocrisy.

DUALITY

There seems to be a distinct difference between the subject matter used and the problems encountered by each

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[1]Edwin Muir, Essays on Literature and Society (Cambridge, 1965), p. 108.

of the poets. Tennyson seems much more interested in the more "homey" side. He was very interested in the relationship between men and women and, in many cases, the relationship between husband and wife. In "The Princess" the dual role of woman is exhibited. Woman is seen as a leader and also the "helpmate" of whom Queen Victoria was so much in favor. In accordance with the typically Victorian dictum, Tennyson likes the "helpmate idea."

> Her falser self slipt from her like a robe,
> And left her woman, lovelier in her mood....
> (Pt. VII, ll. 146-147)

In "In Memoriam" the great duality is embodied in the conflicting forces of doubt and faith. This is a less "homey" problem than "The Princess," but used to illustrate the transformation in the poet's mind are two ceremonies: a funeral and a wedding. These domestic touches are often used in Tennyson's poetry. In addition, the whole concept of the poem is very subjective--based on the death of Arthur Hallam.

And finally, in "Maud" the basic problem is the relationship between man and woman--one of whom is the rejected lover. In addition, Maud may symbolically represent the old aristocracy and the hero may similarly, represent the poor people of England. Thus Tennyson was a great employer and discussant of the domestic part of life.

Browning, however, usually discussed more ethical problems. In his 1845 poem, "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church," there is the duality or the dichotomy

between what people should be and what they are. This theme is also in evidence in "Fra Lippo Lippi." These are complex ethical problems and not the seemingly simple one-to-one relationship which is in evidence in Tennyson's poetry.[2]

And finally, the third poet, Matthew Arnold, seemed to employ duality to discuss more philosophical problems rather than ethical or domestic problems. In the poem "Written in Emerson's Essays" there is the dichotomy between what man can be and what he is. Notable also are the two forces which pull Empedocles, and the feeling seems to be prevalent within "Empedocles on Etna" in "Stanzas From The Grande Chartreuse."

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born....
> (ll. 85-86)

Hence, it can be said that the three major areas generally discussed by Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold are domestic, ethical, and philosophical, and certainly each poet was cognizant of the duality of his age, was influenced by it, and voiced the duality quite clearly.

PROGRESS

Certainly, the Victorian Age was progressive in many ways. It was an age of "revolution," which cannot be exaggerated too strongly. There was revolution in England itself

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[2]Two situations in poems by both Tennyson and Browning which illustrate this would be first the simple one-to-one relationship between the hero and Maud in Tennyson's "Maud" contrasted with the more complex ethical problems in Browning's "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church."

as well as in India and throughout the world "to create the Great Commonwealth of Victoria's reign."[3] Thus, Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold were influenced by this progress; however, they voiced it in different ways.

Tennyson, it seems saw the result of this progress in social action. In "The Princess," Ida decides to become a wife and mother which was the socially accepted action for a woman to take. In "In Memoriam," Tennyson is able to cease being the recluse and intensely mourning Hallam, then to go out into society. And finally, in "Maud" the hero transcends his personal problem and goes to participate in social action in the Crimean War. Hence, in each of these poems there is a social commitment rendered as thematically important.

In Browning's poems there is also a hint of social action, but it does not seem so pronounced as with Tennyson. In Browning's "Nationality in Drinks" Admiral Nelson, the worker for the people who drank beer, receives a short tribute at the end. It may be that Browning was in favor of social action for the common people, and far less in favor of the aristocracy who seemed to have little interest in true public service. This public zeal, however, does not seem to permeate the majority of Browning's poems as it does in Tennyson's. In "Christmas-Day" the narrator is able to worship with the congregation after his transcendental experience on the hill.

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[3]Charles Petrie, The Victorians (London, 1960), p. 260.

This, however, is not to say that this particular narrator will minister to the needs of the public, but he at least will have a warm regard for humanity. The latter theme seems to be the most apparent in Browning's poems--that one should care for others, but Browning does not seem to advocate throwing one's self into the midst of public service as Tennyson proposed.

Personally, Arnold was very much in favor of public service or social action with his entry into the school inspectorship. One wonders, however, how whole-heartedly in favor of public service he truly was when one reads "The Foresaken Merman." Arnold seems to decry the action of Margaret in leaving her family to worship with the people on land instead of staying with her husband and children in the sea. Arnold also seems to chastise the members of Margaret's church who sing their songs, but have an utter lack of regard for the foresaken merman and his small children. In Arnold's "Stanzas From The Grande Chartreuse," however, the poet seems to be more in favor of public service when he criticizes the monks who cloister themselves in the abbey and seem not to care for the needs of others.

> The library, where tract and tone
> Not to feed priestly pride are there,
> To hymn the conquering march of Rome,
> Nor yet to amuse, as ours are!
> They paint of souls the inner strife,
> Their drops of blood, their death in life.
> (11. 48-54)

Thus, the monks, it seems, are lacking a great deal in staying in the abbey and doing their duty. Arnold, it will be noted, uses the term "death in life" to describe them. Arnold seemed to undergo a conflict within himself. Should one pursue the more pleasing private life or should one do his duty, but never really seemed to resolve this problem in his poetry.

Another important part of this progress problem dealt with the emergence of science in the age. Tennyson was very interested in science, was knowledgeable about it, and was an advocate of it. Tennyson included science in "The Princess," since many science courses were taught at Ida's University. Also, in "In Memoriam" Tennyson voiced his belief in a type of physical and spiritual evolution when he said:

> So then were nothing lost to man;
> So that still garden of the souls
> In many a figured leaf enrolls
> The total world since life began....
> (XLIII, stanza 3)

Thus, Tennyson was a strong advocate of science.

Browning, however, was not so interested in evolution as Tennyson was "because he never conceived of it as a physical process." He merely saw this change as a "law of life."[4]

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[4]Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York, 1957) Vol. IV, p. 149.

Thus, in "Easter-Day," Browning mocks the bug collector when he says:

> "One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
> "Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
> "In patient hope, that ten years hence,
> "'Somewhat complete; he may say,
> "'My list of Coleoptera!'"
> (11. 150-154)

"Cleon" also was certainly not the model of progress, since the first century thinker had decided that all had been learned that could be learned. Browning then laments that Victorians were too interested in the progress of materialism and lacked interest in the advancement of the soul. This, of course, is not pro-science.

In Arnold's poem "Stanzas From the Grande Chartreuse" there also seems to be a mention favoring science. Arnold says this concerning the approaching science:

> Allow them! We admire with awe
> The exulting thunder of your race;
> You give the universe your law,
> You trimph over time and space!
> Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
> We laud them, but they are not ours.
>
> We are like children rear'd in shade
> Beneath some old-world abbey wall....
> (11. 163-170)

Thus, Arnold lauds science, and sees the hope for the world in science, but this has not come yet for Arnold and the Victorians. Arnold feels they must still be like children and wait.

Thus, it can be seen that there is a gradual wearing away of the zeal for progress within these three poets. Tenny-

son seems to be most in favor of it, whereas Arnold seems to be least in favor of it. Browning, then, would be classified somewhere in the middle.

HYPOCRISY

The critic, Madden, points out that there was

> the haunting problem of how individual moral experience could be reconciled with the fact of an amoral universe and, more pressingly, with the evils of an immoral and, in some areas, brutalizing society.[5]

Existing then in the Victorian period was the problem of being true to one's self and to society. The three poets saw this problem, were part of it, and voiced it in their writings.

Many people felt that Tennyson was being hypocritical in his poem "Maud" when he seemed to approve of the Crimean War. Since he was the Poet Laureate, people thought that he was merely speaking for the queen when he had his hero go to fight in the war. This was especially poignant since he had spoken out so vehemently against war in his earlier poem, "In Memoriam," when he said:

> Ring out the thousand wars of old,
> Ring in the thousand years of peace.
> (CVI, stanza 7)

This charge seems to have some truth, and it could be advanced that Tennyson was influenced by the Crown after his appointment of 1850.

Browning, on the other hand, was not hypocritical within himself, but rather exhibited what he saw of the hypo-

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[5]William A. Madden, "The Victorian Sensibility," Victorian Studies, VII (1963), p. 87.

crisy of his age through his dramatic monologues and his other poetry. This is dramatically shown in "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church" when the Bishop instructs his sons as to what type of tomb he wants. First, the Bishop had violated his clerical vows by having sons. Second, at a time when he should be interested in the preservation of his soul, he is only interested in material gains. This is a comment on the hypocrisy of the clergy, obviously, but it is also a comment on the materialistic interests of Browning's fellow Victorians.

Another notable reference to the religious hypocrisy of the time is found in Browning's "Christmas-Eve." In this poem the narrator himself sees his own hypocrisy when he initially sits in the dissenter's chapel and feels only contempt for the other worshipers. He then leaves the chapel, becomes transformed, and returns to the chapel with good will in his heart for the others.

Thus, Browning felt that many people are either in religious service or attend church without really feeling the calling or derive from the service what they should. Browning himself was not a constant churchgoer, but rather saw the foibles of some who were the "saintly churchgoers."

In "The Forsaken Merman" Arnold discusses the same theme as does Browning in "Christmas-Eve." It will be remembered that the poor merman and his children stand on the rock and look in the windows at Margaret. In a sense, Margaret

and the other church people are being hypocritical in that they are so immersed in saving their own souls that they are oblivious to the needs of others. In addition, it can be said that Margaret herself is not being true to her convictions since she still looks to the sea in sadness, and, it seems, longs to be back with the merman who she has foresaken. This, Arnold feels was a real problem in this period.

Thus, these three major poets sensed the problem of hypocrisy in their age, and all three, with the possible exception of Tennyson, spoke out against it.

This then is the Victorian Age between 1845 and 1855. Of the three characteristics of the period; duality, progress, and hypocrisy, progress seems to be the most important. This was an age of revolution, transition, and fusion. This period has been commonly thought of as stuffy, hypocritical, and dull. It was not, however, a dull age, but it was not so exhibitionistic as our own age.[6] It was a period of vigorous, rapid movement, which is certainly exhibited in its poetry.

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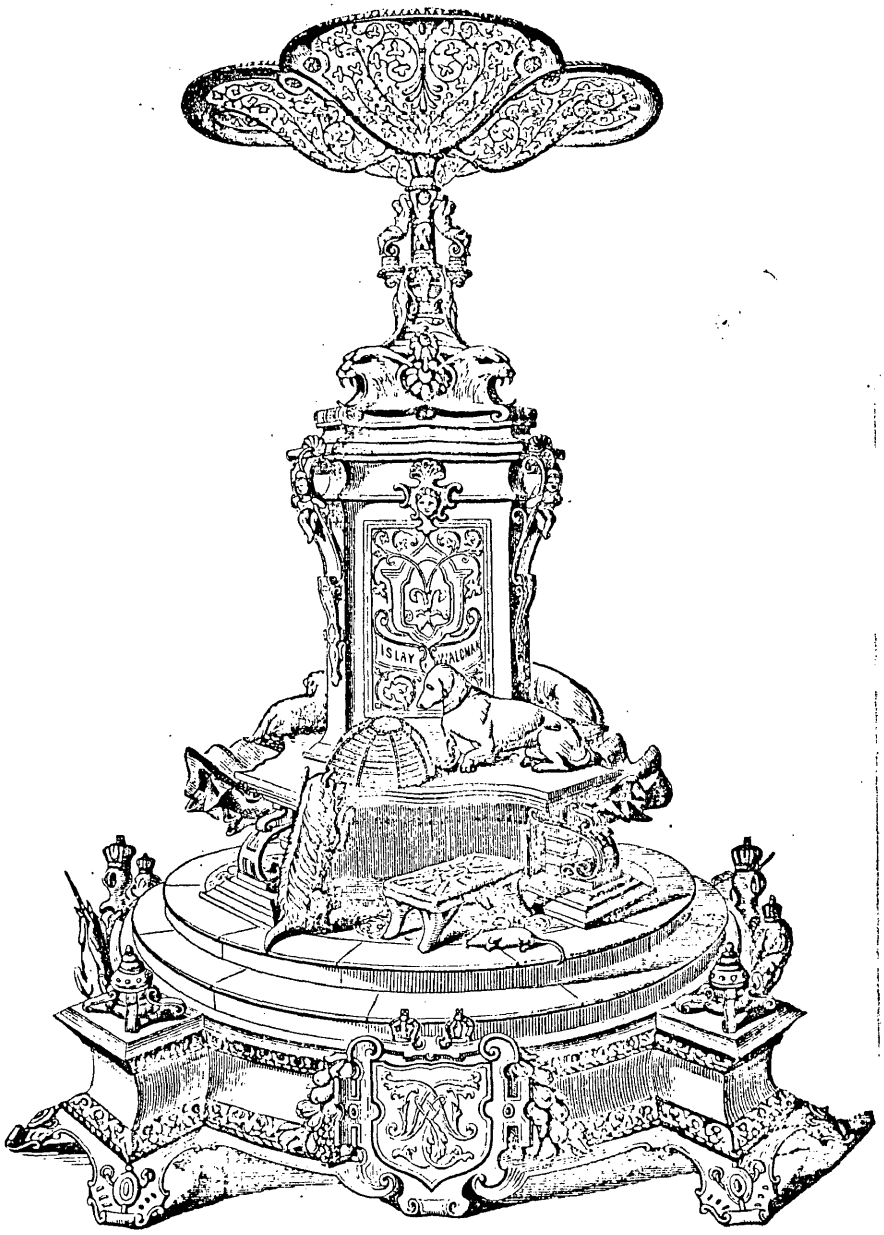
[6]Petrie, p. 27.

APPENDIX I



Centerpiece designed by Prince Albert[1]

[1]Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Victorian Temper (Cambridge, 1951), p. 99.

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